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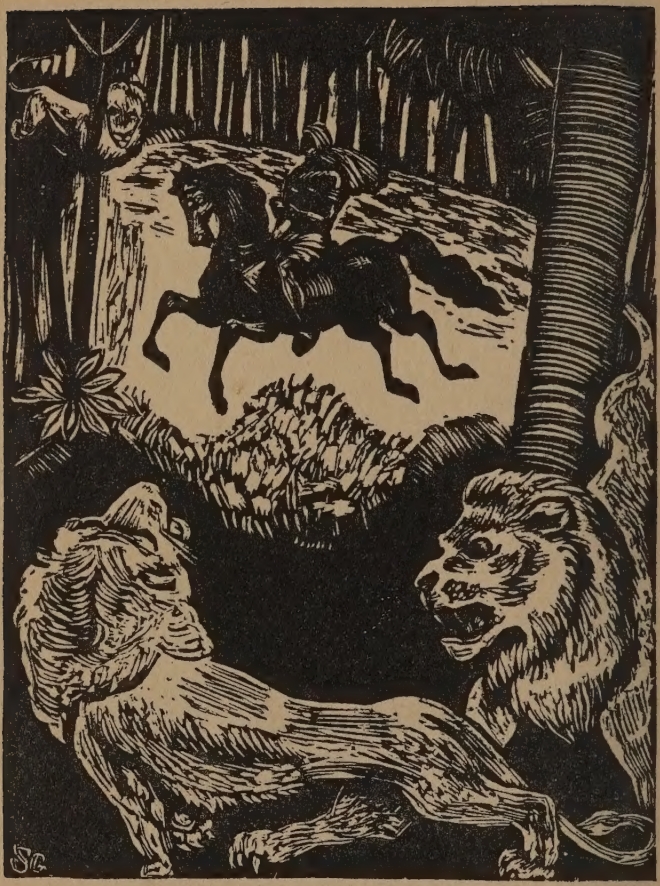
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THE ROMANCE OF ANTAR

by

EUNICE TIETJENS

Illustrated by

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TO THE SEVEN ROSSES,

WHO MAKE A FABULOUS WORLD

IN THEMSELVES

Foreword

THE early Arabian "Romance of Antar" is the greatest, and even to-day the most popular, of the hero stories of the ancient days of Arabia, the days before the coming of Mohammed.

When the Arabs gather about their camp-fires on the desert or in their simple market places of to-day it is not the stories of "The Thousand Nights and One Night," which we call "The Arabian Nights," to which they listen with such rapt attention, but the stories of "The Romance of Antar." Indeed, there is a whole class of professional story tellers, most of whom are blind, who tell only these tales. Such a man is called an "Antari."

In its original version the romance is in forty-five volumes, and the central story of Antar, his exploits

and his love, is continually interwoven and interlocked with other stories, much as the story of Scheherazade is interwoven. But these tales tell of human beings, and the mysterious creatures, the djinn, the fabulous birds, and the other paraphernalia of phantasy, do not appear in them.

Rather, they are a collection of folk tales, in the same sense that the Greek "Iliad" and "Odyssey" are folk tales, collected and retold by a master singer. Though the story as a whole has nothing equal to the tragic tale of Troy, yet Antar himself is as great an epic figure as any of the Greek heroes. Certainly no hero among the Greeks had a more dramatic death than this formidable son of the desert.

The historical foundation for the story of Antar is better authenticated than that of the heroes of the "Iliad," since the great poet and warrior Antarah ibn Shaddad is a historical figure, and many of his poems have survived. His great Kasidah, or ode, is one of the "Seven Golden Poems" which, legend says, were suspended in the temple at Mecca before the days of the Prophet Mohammed.

Yet the life of the authenticated poet Antarah bears but little resemblance to the tale of Antar the hero. Legend has been busy with his name, and has attributed to him all the heroic exploits of his contemporaries, together with other tales of pure invention.

Thus the story as it stands to-day is really a collaboration of a whole people to whom feats of prowess, the beauty of song, undying love, and a great and simple nobility of soul are dear.

Antarah, the poet, died about 600 A.D. Two hundred years later the stories which had clustered about his name were collected and given coherent form, in alternate prose and poetry, by some one—but who it was is not quite clear. The famous scholar and philologist al-Asma'ee, who lived at the court of Harun-al-Rashid, is most commonly given credit for it, but his title is not proven. And it is perhaps fitting that the compiler should have his reward only in the hearts of the people who had themselves done so much towards the creation of their great hero.

In 1819 Terrick Hamilton, who was attached to the British embassy at Constantinople, published an unfinished translation of the original in four volumes, and later added to it the story of the hero's death. To Mr. Hamilton the author of this retelling of the central theme of the romance is chiefly indebted, though two French versions have also been consulted.

THE ROMANCE OF ANTAR

Chapter 1

THE story of the hero Antar, warrior, lover, poet, whom none might conquer in battle, whom none might equal in love, and whom none might surpass in song . . . The echo of his terrible war-cry still sighs in the gusty desert.

For long ago Antar lived, in the great simple days of the world, when the deeds of man were as the deeds of nature herself, terrible, ruthless and beautiful, and when great winds of passion blew across the earth. And even now, when the camp-fires of the Arabs gleam like golden stars on the arid immensity of the desert, stories are told of Antar, his songs are sung, and the hearts of men leap and cry out that such a man once moved under the canopy of the stars.

Now this is the manner of the hero's birth.

His father was an Arab, a noble and a warrior, great of stature, fearless of heart. Shaddad was his name, though he was often called "The Warrior of Jirwet" because of the horse he rode, the mare Jirwet, whose feet were swift on the sands of the desert, and whose fame had spread through all the countryside. Shaddad was of the Tribe of Abs, a noble tribe famed for the bravery of its men and the beauty of its women.

Now the Tribe of Abs was a wandering people, a people of the Bedouins, as were all the tribes of Arabia in that day, save only two or three who had settled in cities. There was enmity between the tribes, and each man's hand was against the stranger, for these were rough days and the clash of swords rang daily beneath the wide sky. Plunder was to the strong and no tribe might hope to keep its property—its women, its slaves, its flocks and its tents—save by endless vigilance and perpetual combat.

It happened then that the flocks of the Tribe of Abs had been depleted by marauders and a way was sought to replenish them. Therefore ten warriors, ten men strong of arm and ready in battle, set out across the desert in search of plunder that the loss might be made good. Among them was Shaddad.

By night the men traveled, and by day they lay

concealed, that none might get wind of their coming. After some days they came at dusk to a place where there was a valley between hills, and certain tracks in the sand led them to believe that men were encamped here. So the Absians turned to the left up a hill, and when they reached the summit, looked down into the valley. And they saw many camp fires and the dim forms of tents. Fearing to attack what seemed like too numerous a party, they lay up in the hills till the light should come and they could see with whom they were met.

With the first light they saw that the valley was filled with the tents and flocks of a powerful tribe, too numerous and well armed for ten men to attack. But even as they looked, in the first gray glimmer of dawn, when the bitter cold of night in the desert was still unabated, and the faintly shimmering light gave a veil of unreality to everything that moved, a large herd of camels detached themselves from the valley and clambered slowly over the cup of the hills. They passed close beside the hidden men of Abs. And following them came a woman, with two children running at her side. For an instant she stood dark against the sky of dawn, and the men saw that she was a tall woman, of fine proportions, who walked with a lithe yet firm step and whose gestures were

graceful. And the heart of Shaddad was moved by the woman.

The men of Abs turned aside, and circling among the rough country, followed the herd from a distance. When they had gone some way and were well removed from the camp, they swooped down upon the herd and turned the camels towards their own camp. And with the beasts they carried away also the slave woman and her two children.

It was not long however before the men of the tribe to whom the camels belonged missed the herd and rode in pursuit. They overtook the Absians and a savage combat took place. But Shaddad and his friends, though outnumbered, fought so fiercely that they beat off the others and remained in undisputed possession of the booty.

Later, in the confines of their own country, they came to a stream-bed where at this season a trickle of water ran. Here they watered the animals and sat down to divide the plunder. And they questioned the slave woman.

Now the woman was dusky of skin, darker than the Arabs, but of extraordinary beauty and well shaped. Her form was delicate, her features clear-cut and fine, and her appearance elegant and striking. Her eyes inspired Shaddad with desire for her.

Her name, she said, was Zabeebah and she was an

Abyssinian princess, whose father was a great chieftain in his own country. She had been carried off by the tribe from whom the men of Abs had taken her, and her two children Shiboob and Jereer had been born to her in captivity.

The men set her apart from themselves and fell to portioning the plunder. And Shaddad said, "Do you divide the camels between you. As for me, I ask nothing but the slave woman and her two children."

Then the men laughed and mocked at Shaddad, for the value of the camels was greater by far than that of a dusky slave. So they divided the camels and continued on their way.

When they arrived at their own quarters Shaddad established the woman and her children in a tent apart from the others. And he visited her often.

In the fullness of time Zabeebah brought forth a son. And the child was like no other child born of the desert. Already at birth he was a being apart, of great size, dark and swarthy as an elephant cub. He was harsh-featured and shaggy-haired, with blear eyes whose inner corners grew red as fire when he was angry, and from which sparks of fire seemed to flash. Strong-boned, long-footed, with ears immensely long, he was like a fragment of a thundercloud. The shape of his body and the form of his

limbs resembled Shaddad, and his father was overjoyed at seeing him and called him Antar. And for many days Shaddad continued to gaze on him with delight.

2

Now this strange and savage child grew apace, and scarcely was he walking on firm legs than it became apparent that he would be a man of unparalleled physical strength and prowess. Then the men of Abs who had been with Shaddad on the foray in which they had captured his mother began to regret their bargain. For now those camels which remained to them seemed of less worth than this slave son of Shaddad's.

So they complained, and went with their complaint to the head of the tribe, the Chieftain Zoheir, saying: "We also assisted in the capture of the child's mother. We should have a share in the child."

The Chieftain said, "What manner of child is this that you dispute concerning him? The matter concerns the Cadi, yet bring him to me that I may see him."

So they brought Antar to the Chieftain as he sat before the door of his tent, eating. And when Zoheir saw the child he was filled with surprise, and he cried out loudly, "Ho, there!" and flung a piece of meat to the boy.

But before Antar could seize it, one of the snarling and savage dogs that follow the tents of the Arabs, and are practically wild beasts, was there before him, snatched up the meat like a hawk and ran. But Antar ran after it till he came up with it. He was greatly enraged and the corners of his eyes glowed like fire. He seized hold of the dog, wrenched open its jaws and tore them in twain even to the shoulders, and snatched the meat out of its mouth. Then he calmly ate it.

The Chieftain was amazed, and he said: "This matter is not for me to decide. Take him to the Cadi." So the men took him to the Cadi, who is head of all matters of law. And the Cadi, after having heard and pondered the matter, awarded Antar to his father Shaddad.

3

Now Antar throve and grew. And he was more like the cub of a lion, fierce and untamable, than like any child known to the Bedouins. He knew not the meaning of fear.

When he was four years old he began to leave the camp on long expeditions of his own, for like a lion he loved solitude, the great free sweep of the desert under the blazing sun by day, and the freezing and terrible cold by night under the stars. He loved the

ragged mountainsides also and clambered like the wild antelope upon them. Of animals too, no matter how savage, he had not the slightest fear. He slew wolves. He would seize the fierce dogs and ride upon them. And his boldness increased day by day.

In the camp he was a great bully. He would eat nothing that he did not like. He would do nothing that did not please him. He tyrannized over the other slave boys, beating them savagely with a stick when they offended him. His half-brothers Shiboob and Jereer he also beat unmercifully, so that the camp was filled with his brawlings. He would brook no authority save from his father Shaddad. As for his mother Zabeebah, he loved her as a cub loves, and though she could not command him, yet by love she ruled him.

When he was a little older it became his duty to go into the hills with the herds of camels and the flocks of scrawny brown sheep with their fat tails. At first he went with Zabeebah, but later he went alone with the animals. And this pleased him.

But he was no herdsman by nature, and with him the flocks fared ill. He would drive them before him, urging them on by a shower of small stones which he had learned to throw with unerring skill. When the animals had strayed away, even at a long distance,

he would hit them with a stone from the sling he carried, and he would run after them so swiftly, with such raucous cries, that the beasts were terrified. They grew lean from much driving and little feeding, and ulcers grew upon their feet where they were cut by the sharp stones over which they were thus driven.

At other times he would forget the flocks altogether, and lie for long hours on his face in the sun, lost in far thoughts of his own. Then the flocks strayed away and were lost, or broke their legs in steep places —for the legs of camels break easily—or were eaten by wild beasts.

Now all these things marked Antar as a being apart, who fitted ill with the slaves of the tribe, and who seemed destined to make trouble as he grew older. His father Shaddad, though he took pride in the boy's strength and courage, yet was troubled concerning him. He beat him for injuring the flocks and knew not what to make of him.

"What will be the end of this strange son of mine?" thought Shaddad.

4

Yet for all the savagery of the boy, already there were stirring in him, underneath his uncouth deeds,

two forces which were to mold him into what he became at last, and though they never weakened him, yet they set boundaries to the fierceness of his deeds and the insolence of his heart. These forces were tenderness and chivalry towards women, and the power of song. But as yet the forces were dormant in him, unsuspected by his companions.

When Antar was fifteen one of these forces woke him to a deed which was to be the pivot of his life, though as yet the force was but half the motive for the deed.

Now the manner of it was this.

The head of the tribe, the Chieftain Zoheir, had ten sons, and their characters differed among themselves. But with only two of them was the story of Antar concerned. The first was the eldest son, Prince Shas, who was heir to the possessions of Zoheir, a proud and restless man, who brooked interference ill. The other was a younger son, Prince Malik, a brave man also, yet just and generous, beloved by all the tribe for the gentle kindness of his disposition. And these men now took cognizance of the slave Antar, and as they saw him first so they continued throughout their lives towards him.

The Chieftain had two hundred slaves who tended his herds of he and she camels, and each of his sons had the same; for a powerful tribe was the Tribe of

Abs. Now the leader of the slaves of Prince Shas was a man named Daji, a powerful man and a great bully, whom the prince valued highly because of his vast bodily strength. There was not a slave in the camp but feared him and trembled before him, save only the boy Antar who made no account of him, and disliked him, so that there was enmity between them, which as yet however had never broken into flame, since Daji disdained the boy and thought him beneath his notice.

One day the poor men, the widows and orphans of the tribe met together to drive their flocks to water. And this occurred when the tribe was encamped at a spot which was the furthermost point of the land of Hejaz and the first of the land of Yemen. There was water here, yet it was none too plentiful, and care must be taken that all might drink.

The poor people therefore drove their flocks some distance from the camp to a place where there was a pool of water. But the pool was shallow and filled slowly, and only once a day might it be used, for what water the herds did not drink was so muddied as to be useless.

Just as they had reached the spot however this Daji rode up and stopped them, driving them insolently from the water and taking possession of it for his master's cattle. Therefore an old man of the

tribe came up to him and accosted him in a suppliant manner, saying,

"Be so good, master Daji, as to let my cattle drink. They are all the property I possess, and I live by their milk. Pity my flock; have compassion on me and grant my request, and let them drink." But Daji paid no attention to his demand and abused him.

Then came an old woman, shriveled and worn with the hard life of the desert, and addressed him:

"O master Daji," she implored him, "I am a poor weak old woman, as you see. Time has dealt hardly with me—it has aimed its arrows at me, and its daily and nightly calamities have destroyed all my men. I have lost my husband and my children, and am in great distress. These few sheep are all I possess and without them I shall perish. Pity my forlorn state, and be so good as to let them drink."

But when Daji heard these words, and perceived the crowd of women and men, his pride increased and his obstinacy was not to be moved. Bully that he was, he struck the old woman on the stomach, so that she fell over on her back, and her nakedness was uncovered. And all the slaves that were with Daji laughed at her distress.

Now Antar also was in that spot, and when he saw what had occurred, pity for the woman fanned into sudden flame his hatred of Daji, and a great rage

played throughout all his limbs. He ran to Daji and cried out:

"You thing of ill omen! What mean you by this disgusting action? Do you dare so to insult an Arab woman? My God destroy your limbs, and all that consented to this act!"

When Daji saw himself thus confronted he was overcome by surprise and indignation. He raised his hand and struck Antar a blow over the face that nearly knocked out his eyes. And Antar could scarcely see, for the blow and the rage that was in him. But he waited till he had recovered from the blow, and his senses had returned to him.

Then he rushed at the slave and, seizing him by one of his legs, he threw him on his back. He thrust one hand under Daji's thighs, and with the other he grasped his neck, and raising him by a terrible effort above his head he dashed him against the ground. So great was his force that the slave's length and his breadth were all one mass.

But Antar stood above the body, filled with a boundless fury, his eyes red as fire, and roared aloud, even as a lion roars.

When the slaves who were with Daji perceived the fate of their leader they cried out to Antar:

"You have slain the slave of Prince Shas! What man on earth can now protect you?" And they at-

tacked him and fell upon him with staves and stones. But he resisted them all, and laid about him with his stick as a warrior with his sword.

Nevertheless, in spite of Antar's courage, since they were so many they might have overcome him and slain him, had not good fortune sent the gentle Prince Malik riding that way, who when he saw the unequal contest, ended it. And when he had questioned those standing by and learned the cause of the trouble, he promised Antar his protection.

So Prince Malik took the boy back to camp with him and presented him before the Chieftain Zoheir, with an account of what he had done. And Prince Shas came also to his father and demanded Antar's death in return for the slave he had killed.

But the Chieftain was a just man, and justice has always been highly esteemed among the Arabs. When he had heard the whole story he warmly applauded the conduct of Antar, saying:

"This is a valiant fellow, who has defended the honor of women. He will shine a noble warrior, and destroy his enemies."

That day, upon Antar's return home, all the women crowded round him, praising him for his gallant behavior. And among them was Abla, the daughter of Milik, his father Shaddad's brother.

5

But though, following the Chieftain's lead, most of the tribe now praised Antar as a promising youth, yet by this deed he had made certain enemies. He had incurred the hatred of Prince Shas, a hatred which was to follow him throughout many years. His

two uncles also, Shaddad's brothers Milik and Jewad, came to hate him with a feeling founded upon fear.

That evening these uncles met together and took counsel. And Milik said, "O my brother, I know not what will be the consequence of the actions of this swarthy slave of our family. This time no ill has come to us because of him, but he that has done one

such deed will assuredly do others. I fear that to-morrow he will destroy some one of rank and power. Then a disturbance will arise throughout the tribe, our blood will be demanded, and our persons may pay the forfeit."

"Brother," answered Jewad, "you have hit the mark. After what has happened it will no longer be safe for Shaddad to let him take the family camels and cattle to the pasture. He is therefore of no further use to us, and he is certain in time to endanger our lives and that of Shaddad. Let us therefore take measures to put him to death."

"You are right," said Milik. "Let us do as you say. But it must be done in secret, or the Chieftain will be angry, and Shaddad also. Let us therefore waylay him and kill him in the meadows in some secret spot."

So a few days later Milik and Jewad followed Antar's steps as he led the cattle forth to graze, for Shaddad had made no change in his employment.

Now on that day the boy was riding about in the wide plains and deserts, galloping at random over the wastes. At last he came to a valley called "The Valley of Lions" because many ferocious wild animals haunted it. And here Antar let the cattle graze.

"Perhaps," said he to himself, "I shall now find a lion, and I will slay him!" This he thought because

the blood was hot in his veins. So he went up on a mound from which he could see all about him, and waited. Presently, while the cattle were grazing, behold! a lion appeared in the valley even as he thought. The lion stalked about and roared aloud. Vast was his strength and his force dreadful. His nostrils were wide and fire flashed from his eyes so that the whole valley trembled at every gnash of his fangs. He was a calamity. As soon as he appeared the cattle scented him and fled in terror and the camels were dispersed to the right and left.

No sooner did Antar observe this commotion than he ran down into the valley, brandishing his club. There he saw the lion, terrible in his strength, lashing his sides with his tail. Antar cried out to him, and the mountains re-echoed to his cry.

"Welcome, O father of lions, foul beast of the plains! Come now! Put forth your power and your might and pride yourself on your roar, for no doubt you are the monarch of the brute creation and all tremble before you. But do you think, foul-mouthed beast about to die, that you can frighten Antar with your roar or alarm him with your bellow? I will not condescend to slay you with an arrow or a weapon, but I will make you drink of the cup of death with these hands alone!"

So shouting the youth flung away his club, and rushed upon the lion.

Now it happened that Antar's uncles Milik and Jewad came up to kill him at the moment when he descended into the valley. They saw him shout defiance to the lion and heard what he threatened. And Antar was but little less terrible than the lion to behold, his eyes red as fire, his every gesture fierce as an eagle's.

He sprang forward and fell on the lion like a hailstorm, and hissed at him like a black serpent. He met the lion as he sprang and outroared his bellow. Then he seized hold of the beast's mouth with his hands and wrenched it open to his shoulders. And he shouted aloud till the valley and the country round echoed at his roaring. He stuck to the lion till it was dead, then dragged him by the legs out of the valley.

Here he built a fire and waited till it blazed. Then he ripped up the lion, took out the entrails and cut off his four legs, which he threw into the flames. When he saw that they were roasted, he took them out and ate thereof till he had finished his meal.

Now his uncles had been watching all this with amazement and terror. When they had somewhat recovered themselves, Jewad said:

"Verily this slave has not his equal. No one in his senses would engage him!"

Milik also trembled. "What shall we do with the wretch?" he asked. "Great indeed has been the deed he has done. None of us can harm him. He would soon destroy us, and tear out our entrails, or do as he has done with the lion."

"Let us return home," said Jewad. "We must find some other means to kill him and accomplish our wishes." So they stole away in secret and told no one of what they had seen.

But Antar came swaggering into camp, his swarthy face lit with pride, the corners of his eyes still red from his rage against the lion, and his hands and his clothing rusty with blood. He threw down the lion's skin, with the head still gory upon it, before the feet of Zabeebah his mother, and he cried:

"This have I brought you in sign of my prowess. Had ever mother such a son?"

Now these were the early years of Antar, and of such stuff was the hero made.

Chapter 2

NOT many moons thereafter a new force which was to mold his life woke in Antar, the force of love. And love came upon him sudden and overpowering as a desert sandstorm, so that he was all but stifled in it. In this wise it came.

Antar, as the slave of Shaddad, was also the slave of Shaddad's brother Milik and of the women of Milik's household. Now Milik's daughter Abla was as lovely as the full moon. Her eyes were pools of liquid darkness and her hair black as night, so that it fell across her white and tender skin like a dusky caress.

She was a merry lass, younger than Antar, who had now reached the age of sixteen and was already the strongest man in the camp. The two had always

known one another and Abla was wont to joke with the boy, as one does at times with slaves. Yet never had there been aught but the merriment of children between them.

But, unnoticed by the boy, Abla had been growing to womanhood. The little buds of her breasts already were pushing out the bosom of her shrift, and a sweet troubling of her clear child's heart had come upon her.

Now it was the custom of the Arab women to drink, in the morning and in the evening, clear draughts of camel's milk, which had previously been cooled in the wind. And it was Antar's duty to take this draught to Milik's tent.

One morning then, when the sun had already leaped, round and blazing, above the rim of the desert, Antar came to his uncle's tent with the bowl of milk. He lifted the flap of the tent unannounced, as was his custom, and entered. And it was dark in the tent, for the low roof of woven camel's hair made a grateful shade from the blare of the desert, so that at first he could see little. When his vision had cleared, he saw that Abla sat upon a low stool and that her mother was dressing her hair, which flowed down her back in sable waves.

Antar looked at her, and for the first time saw her as a man sees. It seemed to him that he had received a terrific blow, both between the eyes and in

his breast. His heart stopped beating and his whole frame shook.

And Abla, looking up and seeing him there, his blazing eyes upon her, felt the sweet trouble deepen within her. She sprang up, casting down her eyes, and fled from him into the inner apartment of the tent. And as she went her hair waved to the ground behind her.

After her went her mother, scolding.

But when Antar had recovered his senses and had come forth into the sunlight once more, he went away with great strides into the hills and there he lay the day through, his heart pounding and his thoughts struggling within him. But when evening came, and the calm of the cool night, he made a song for her. And thus it went.

"Abla let down her ringlets and was completely hidden in her hair, which is like the shades of night.

It was as though she were the brilliant day, whom night had covered with obscurity.

It was as though the full moon were shining in its splendor, and all the stars were 'paled by its lustre.

Her charms bewitch all around her, so that they long to serve her.

They live in her beauty and loveliness. They are imbued with sweetness from her perfections and receive new spirit from her graces.

Revile me not for my love of her, for I am distracted by her, and I live only as the victim of my love. I will conceal my affection in my soul, till one day I may be fortunate enough to serve her."

So, with love, song came to Antar.

2

But when the first blinding flame of his love was passed, Antar looked more calmly upon its meaning to him. And despair overcame him.

For Abla was indeed as far above him as the full moon to whom he likened her. She was the daughter of a noble, fair and free as the white gazelle. And he was but a swarthy slave, born of a captured slave woman, having no position beyond that of a menial and no power to fend for him save that of his own courage and strength.

Then a great resolve came to the boy, and he swore a terrible oath, binding it by all he held sacred, that he would raise himself above the circumstances of his birth, and by deeds of dazzling courage make himself worthy of Abla.

And this was the oath he swore:

"O noble maid, I swear that till I exalt myself to the heights of glory by my courage and my strength in combat, I will expose myself to every peril wherever the spears clash in the battle-dust.

"Then shall I either be tossed upon the spear-heads, or be numbered among the noble!"

3

Now it happened that some time later the Chieftain Zoheir wished to make an expedition against a neighboring tribe. And he summoned to him Antar's father Shaddad, with all the warriors of the tribe of Abs, and led them forth to battle. The women therefore were left alone with the children and the slaves. And because, young as he was, Antar was by far the strongest among them, the women were intrusted to his care particularly, with orders not to let them go too far afield.

When the horsemen had ridden away the women resolved to amuse themselves. Semiah, the high-born wife of Shaddad, therefore gave orders that a magnificent entertainment should be prepared by the borders of a lake near which the tribe was encamped. The girls came with their musical instruments, sheep

were slaughtered, fine food was prepared, and wine flowed.

Antar stood among the attendant slaves and was in a transport of joy when he saw Abla appear with the other women. She was lovely as a playful fawn. She was dressed in a robe of bright colors and many necklaces hung about her neck, while her slender arms bore bracelets of gold. Her sable tresses, in the shade of which Antar's heart was lost, hung unbound down her back.

They sat down to eat, and the wine-cups went merrily round.

Now it was part of Antar's duty to serve the wine, and as he approached Abla with the cup in his hands his senses were filled with the fragrant perfume she wore. A great giddiness came over the lad and his limbs trembled. But Abla, as she took the cup, smiled up at him merrily.

Then a sudden resolution came to Antar. He stepped boldly forth before all the company and began to recite a song he had made in praise of Abla. All the women, astonished, ceased their chatter to listen. And Antar sang:

"The lovely virgin has struck my heart with the arrow of a glance, for which there is no cure.

She moves: I should say it was the branch of a tamarisk that waves its branches in the southern breeze.
She approaches: I should say it was the frightened fawn, when a calamity alarms it in the waste.
She gazes: I should say it was the full moon of the night when Orion girds it with his stars.
She smiles: and the pearls of her teeth sparkle, in which there is cure for the sickness of lovers.

O Abla! when I most despair, love for you is my only hope.
Should fortune or my father assist me, I will show myself worthy of you by my fearless spirit!"

Now it was the custom among the Arabs to compose and to recite verses upon many occasions, yet never had a slave done aught like this. When he had finished, laughter went round the women like a peal of silver bells at the swarthy uncouth lad who thus openly declared his hopeless passion. Yet, though they laughed, the hearts of the women were touched. Only in Semiah's laughter was there truly scorn.

Abla herself, when she heard this description of her charms, was lost in astonishment. A pleasant warmth stole through her, and she blushed and low-

ered her eyes. Yet she did not leave the feast, but continued to converse with her companions.

It was now the spring of the year, the short Arabian spring, when for but a few days the whole land shone in all its glory. Vines hung luxuriantly in the arbors; flowers spread around intoxicating fragrance; every hillock sparkled in the beauty of its colors; birds sang in responsive melody from every bush, and the nightingales filled the air with langorous notes. And not yet had the harsh heat withered these things.

The damsels beat their cymbals and sang slow bewitching songs in praise of spring and its beauties. Abla sang with the others, and Antar's heart beat strongly in his breast.

Then the general merriment rose higher. The women took off their hampering outer clothing and stood forth in slight clinging garments to form a dance. The damsels danced while the servants sang and carried round goblets of wine. Roses were spread over the cheeks of the women and their bosoms heaved. Fire shot from their eyes, and the cups of wine were united to the honey of their lips.

Abla also stood forth with the others in the dance. Her garment of softest silk, brought from Tyre, clung to her swaying body, so that no charm was hidden. And she laughed.

Antar stood watching her, his whole being over-

whelmed with his love, and his heart beating so that it shook him as he stood. Yet with his joy was mingled a strange sense of shame that he should be permitted to see this thing which no Arab warrior might see, for it meant that the men counted him as less than a man, as a slave only, to whom no passions were permitted.

While he stood thus struggling with himself, suddenly a great cloud of dust appeared and a vast clamor arose. In a moment the dust disclosed a troop of horses and their riders, about seventy in number, armed with breast-plates and coats of mail, and with beaten helmets. The warriors cried their war-cry, "O by Cahtan!" and rushed upon the women.

In an instant joy was turned to grief and smiles to tears. The enemy warriors seized the women and maidens, made them prisoners, set them on their horses behind them and rode away.

Antar was sunk so deep in the bewitchment of his love that for an instant he knew not what had happened. But when he saw a horseman swoop down upon Abla and with a single gesture sweep her to the saddle behind him, when he saw her cheeks turn from red to a deadly pallor and tears gush from her eyes, the world seemed to close about him like a trap. He remembered that he had no arms with which to fight and was dismayed.

Then his dismay was swallowed in a boundless fury. Like a raging beast he sprang after the warrior, who rode in the rear, overtook him and clung to him. He overpowered him, threw him on his head and broke his neck. Then Antar took possession of the dead man's armor and his steed. He mounted and rode furiously in pursuit. He overtook the others and dashed into the middle of them.

And now for the first time the hero sent forth his great war-cry, the cry which in later years was heard throughout the length and breadth of the land, the cry that froze the marrow in the bones of the enemy. "O by Abs!" he cried, "I am the lover of Abla! You are dead men!" And he threw himself upon them like the demon of wrath.

Those in the rear he slew, raising a great outcry, abusing and cursing them as he fought. The clamor reached those ahead, so that they turned at full gallop, pouncing like eagles. They saw their companions dead on the sands and returned to attack him. But Antar rushed forward to meet them. Harder than flint was his heart, and in his attack was their destiny.

Picking out the chief of the party, he plunged at him, he grappled with him, his shout struck him with terror. He pierced his bosom with his spear and forced it out through his back.

When the other warriors saw this they quaked with

fear, and felt convinced that death itself rode with this shouting giant. And they said one to another:

"If a mere slave has brought this destruction upon us, a wretch, mean and worthless, what will happen if the warriors come to his assistance? Let us fly, or we are indeed dead men!"

So they fled in disorder, abandoning the women, and retreating in disgrace and despair. And Antar, as soon as they were dispersed, collected the scattered horses and a great quantity of arms. He returned home, taking with him twenty-five horses and all the women and children.

Now Semiah, the high-born wife of his father Shaddad, had never liked the swarthy Antar, her husband's son by a slave woman. She had scorned him and mocked at him. But now her hatred was converted into love and tenderness, and he became dearer to her than sleep. Yet she was afraid that if the warriors knew what had occurred the women would be blamed for having gone so far afield. So she swore every one to secrecy concerning what had happened. And Antar also kept it secret.

In a short time the Chieftain Zoheir returned from his victory over the enemy tribe, and brought with him an immense booty. So both those that went and those that stayed were greatly rejoiced.

4

The next day in the morning Shaddad went out on horseback to look at his herds and flocks. He perceived among his horses some strange ones, and also saw Antar riding upon a black mare.

"Whence," cried he, "come these animals? And whence got you this mare that excites my wonder?"

Now the mare Antar was riding had belonged to the chief of the Cahtans, and the other horses were those he had captured from the slain warriors. The arms and other spoils he had concealed at his mother Zabeebah's tent. And Antar, remembering his promise to Semiah, answered:

"O master, as I was tending the herds yesterday, there came some Cahtans, enemies of our tribe, and with them an immense quantity of cattle. They were much fatigued and moreover frightened at our warriors. I followed them and, finding these horses separated from the rest, I took them and brought them back."

"You wicked slave!" cried Shaddad. "These are no horses strayed from their owners! You have carried them off from beneath their riders. For this reason you are always wandering in the wilds and rocks, and every Arab you meet you kill, whether

he be friend or enemy! Your conduct will be the cause of endless feuds among the Arabs."

Shaddad then laid hold of Antar and bound him with a rope.

"Here," said he, "you shall remain tied up. Never again will I let you take my herds to the pasture!"

Then he beat him with the whip he carried in his hand, and as he lashed he cursed and abused him. But Antar bore it all in silence.

At last Semiah came out and, seeing what was going on, she wept bitterly. She sprang forward and threw herself on her husband's breast, exclaiming:

"Sooner should you beat me than him! He does not deserve such ill treatment, O Shaddad."

Then Shaddad became angry with her also and shoved her away with such violence that she fell on her back. But she rose up and cast herself into Antar's arms, uncovering her head, and letting her hair flow down over his breast. Shaddad was overcome with surprise.

"What has happened to this wretch?" he exclaimed, "that you, who have ever scorned him, feel so much affection and tenderness towards him?"

"Loose his bonds," said Semiah, "and I will tell you all."

"Tell me," answered Shaddad, "and I will release him."

Then she told him all that Antar had done: how the other slaves had fled, every one, trembling in fright: how Antar alone had attacked seventy horsemen and had driven them back in confusion and despair, and had brought back in safety all the women and children. She gave so eloquent an account that Shaddad's heart was moved, and she ended her pleading in this wise:

"It is just that I should respect him and protect him. He protected my honor and preserved the honor of us all."

Then Shaddad rejoiced, and freed Antar from his bonds, his rage now turned to pride. "It is surprising," he thought, "that he has kept all this to himself, even while I beat him. How submissive he was! Truly this is wonderful!"

Antar however stood unconcerned, and listened to Semiah's acknowledgements. He bore no resentment and a verse in praise of Semiah sprang from his lips.

"Oh, is it from Semiah that these tears flow in anguish, and from a heart in flames?
The goods are your goods, the slave your slave. All my strength, and my life itself, shall be exerted to defend you.

If I do not disperse, in the clash of contending spears, all who attack you, may I never be permitted to drink,
May the rain-drop never moisten me!"

When he heard this Shaddad's surprise and delight were greatly increased, for as yet he knew not that his son could compose verses. To be a song-smith in those days was considered a great virtue, and a tribe who boasted a true poet was thereby greatly exalted; for they were a people of simple heart, and these have always loved the poets.

Then Shaddad humbled himself and begged Antar's pardon, for he was convinced that such deeds and such song could only come from an exalted warrior.

At that moment a slave came from the Chieftain Zoheir, who saluted Shaddad. "The Chieftain sends you his salutation," said he, "and requests that you attend a feast he has prepared in honor of his victory."

Shaddad took Antar with him and went to the Chieftain's tents, which he found resounding with cymbals and other musical instruments. Food had been prepared, and there were assembled all the warriors of Abs and Adnan, their allies, and all the valiant heroes attached to them. Shaddad seated himself

among the noble chieftains, but Antar sat down among the slaves.

When they had eaten and drunk however Shaddad told the Chieftain all that had occurred, praising his son Antar, and repeating his deeds and his verses.

"All this," cried the Chieftain, rejoicing greatly, "I foresaw at the time he slew the slave of my son Shas. I knew he would be the refuge of every petitioner. And I foresee again that he will rise superior to all of us!"

He called out to Antar and ordered him into his presence. Antar kissed his hands and presented him the cup, in the manner of slaves.

"Not so!" cried the Chieftain. "Do you drink with me." And he set him by his side and gave him to drink of his most delicious wines. He gave him too a superb robe, worked in gold, and one of his finest Arabian horses. He girded him with a trusty sword. And he took pleasure in conversing with him and called him "The Champion of the Absians."

"From this day forward," said he to Shaddad, "I will not permit him to be employed as a keeper of camels. Now that he has distinguished himself by such glorious deeds, let him run the career of victory with the warriors of his country."

Thus did Antar begin the fulfillment of his great resolve.

Chapter 3

AFTER this Antar rode with the warriors on their expeditions and did valiant deeds. And he went also on forays of his own, accompanied only by his half-brother Shiḥoob, son of his mother Zabeebah by her former master.

Shiboob, like Antar, had passed his days abroad with the flocks. But he was of another nature. He was an active sagacious fellow, with a persuasive tongue, and instead of running over the land for the sheer joy of the running and seeking solitude in high places as Antar had done, Shiboob had learned to know every inch of the country. He knew every likely camping ground, every place of resort, every smallest waterhole and well. He kept track also of the movements of the tribes and of all parties that

passed across the desert, and knew where they might be come up with; for vast and trackless as is the desert, yet parties traveling on it go by certain recognized routes, keeping to lines of waterholes. Shiboob too was a wonderfully fast runner, the swiftest in the countryside, and very skillful with the bow and arrow. In the fights he covered Antar's rear, dealing death with his arrows. In this way he proved of great assistance to Antar, to whom he was devoted with an unquestioning devotion.

Thus Antar was always successful in his forays, and he never went on any expedition but he succeeded, and returned full of joy and content. So his father Shaddad became enriched, and all the noblest chieftains delighted in Antar.

2

Antar, though still a slave, was now become the talk of the camp. In every society the people, assembled round their wine, mentioned his exploits and talked of his love for Abla and his poetry. In time this came to the ears of Abla's mother and her father Milik. And it angered them. When they heard Antar's poetry mentioned they ridiculed it, and they would not receive him on friendly terms. They showed their aversion to him in every way, and made

him perform all sorts of menial offices, showing plainly that they considered him only a slave. But Antar performed all their wishes patiently.

At last, when the talk about Abla gained ground, her mother ordered Abla into the presence of her grandfather and sent also for Antar.

"So you love my daughter Abla!" she scoffed at Antar, "and make verses upon her, causing her to be talked about by the tribe. And you cannot conceal your feelings!"

Now Abla was standing beside her mother, and when she heard her speak to Antar, she smiled. This increased the hero's confusion, for it called forth all his love. But he mastered his emotion and made answer:

"O mistress, did you ever see any one who hated his mistress, particularly when his life and death are in her hands? Verily I do love her, and my only wish in this world is to be near her. And I exalt in my verse all that God has granted her of beauty and loveliness."

When Abla heard him speak thus manfully in her praise her surprise increased, and Antar made great progress in her heart. Even her mother was taken aback and somewhat mollified.

"If," she said to him, "you are in earnest in what

you say of my daughter, let us hear some of your verses in praise of her charms."

Upon this Antar hung down his head for a moment, and then spoke.

"I love you with the love of a noble-born hero, and
I am content with your imaginary image.
You are my sovereign in my very blood, and my
mistress.

O Abla, my description can not portray you, for you
are perfection's self.
Were I to say, 'Your face is like the full moon in
heaven,' where, in that full moon, is the eye of
the antelope?
Or, 'Your teeth are like stringed jewels,' how could
I liken them to lifeless pearls?

In your forehead is my guide to truth, and in the
night of your tresses I wander astray.
Under your veil is the rose-bud of my life, and your
eyes are guarded with a multitude of arrows.
Round your tent is a lion warrior, the sword's edge,
and the spear's point.
Your face, like the moon in heaven, is allied to light,
but far from my hopes.

Yet, if I could, I would make my eye your resting place."

When Antar ceased Abla's mother was astonished, and her dislike towards him diminished. As for the maiden herself she cast down her eyes, and a blush mantled in her cheeks. Abla's mother then said:

"I had no idea you could talk in this way, and speak with so much elegance and propriety. By the faith of an Arab, you are endowed with high and noble qualities. To-night I intend to speak to my husband Milik, that he may marry you to Khemisa, Abla's servant, who is the prettiest of all the girls of the place."

"Never," answered Antar fervently, "will I be united to a woman who is a slave, who is not free born. And never will I wed another but her my soul adores!"

Then Abla, taking courage from his courage, raised her head and answered him fairly.

"May God," she said, "accomplish your wishes! May he grant you the woman you love, and may you live in peace and happiness!"

"Amen, amen, amen!" said Antar.

3

So a great joy came to the hero, and he was more than ever resolved to win glory for himself that he might attain to his heart's desire.

But he was still a slave. This thought galled him night and day, till at last he went to his mother Zabeebah, as she sat in her tent in the cool of the evening.

"Mother," said Antar, "tell me truly the circumstances of my birth, for never have I known them exactly."

So his mother told of her capture, of how Shaddad had claimed her as his portion of the spoils, and of Antar's birth. She told him too of the quarrel over him as a small child and of how the Cadi had awarded him to Shaddad.

"Why then, O mother," said he when she had finished, "if the Cadi decided that I was Shaddad's son, and the others have also agreed that I was sprung from his loins, does he not call me his son as others do?"

"That would cost him dear," she answered, "and he cannot resolve to do it, because he says you are base-born of a slave woman." Here Zabeebah's eyes flashed. "Yet in my own country I was a princess, the daughter of a great chieftain!" After an instant she went on more quietly. "He is afraid of the dis-

grace he would incur by giving you the rank and honor of a son. For this has never been done among the Arabs, and they would not consent to it."

"Never would I permit that to be the case," cried Antar, "for whoever would bring disgrace upon Shaddad, I would soon kill him. But if my father still denies me my right and rank, I will use my sword and spear upon him! And if my uncle Milik denies me Abla, I will use him in the same fashion!"

"For heaven's sake," besought his mother, "do nothing of the kind! You will gain nothing by that. You are admired for your noble deeds, not for such recklessness. And when you talk of marrying Abla you talk of an impossibility. How can a slave, without connection or rank, aspire to the hand of the daughter of an Arab noble? Especially as you were brought up tending the sheep and camels?"

"O mother," cried Antar, "I will show you wonders! My soul pants for honor and dignity, and with my sword I will win them!"

Now it chanced not long after this that the Chieftain Zoheir gave a feast to celebrate a victory of the tribe in which Antar had had great part. At the feast Zoheir again made much of the hero and all the tribe praised him. The wine went merrily round, and Antar was inflamed with praise and with wine. Therefore, when the feast had ended, he accompanied

Shaddad to his tent, kissed his father's feet and said:

"O master, why do you not grant me my due, as others far and near have done? Why do you not bestow upon me what I so much desire?"

"Tell me," said Shaddad, "what you want, that I may be kind to you. I will not avariciously refuse you." For he thought that Antar wanted a camel to ride, or a separate tent to live in, or a female slave to attend him.

But Antar replied, "I request of you, O master, the rank and dignity of an Arab, and that you should acknowledge me formally as your son, and yourself as my father, so that my rank shall be made known, and I become a noble. In truth I will reward you as no one else can. I will reduce the Arab princes themselves to your obedience, through fear of my sword and spear!"

When Antar had finished speaking, Shaddad's eyes almost started from his head, his affection cooled, and a great disorder came into his mind.

"You base-born!" he cried, "have you forgotten that you tended the sheep and cattle and collected the ordure of beasts among the mountains? You son of a slave, the Chieftain's robe flaps about your loins and his words float in your ears, till you have raised yourself on high, to demand of me what no man has done. You would make me a by-word with every one that

hears you. Nothing have I for you but a sword, and with it I shall cut off your head!"

Upon this he drew his sword and rushed upon Antar, who stood dismayed.

Now Semiah, Shaddad's wife, had heard the dispute and came out crying and lamenting. She rushed towards her husband and kissed his bosom and took the sword out of his hand.

"Never shall you slay him!" she cried. "I have not forgotten his virtues and his noble exploits. Too much wine must have urged him to this fancy. Therefore do not punish him for what he has said." And she did not stop her pleading till Shaddad's anger was cooled and he went away into the inner apartment of his tent.

But Antar was in the greatest agony of mind. He was ashamed that the day should dawn upon him or that he should look again on the face of his father. He accordingly went out and sought the tent of Prince Malik, his protector. His clothes trailed upon the ground through shame, and his tears flowed from the great pain in his heart, that he had let intoxication overcome his judgment.

Prince Malik looked at him, who had been so much honored but a short while ago, and saw his tears flowing from his tortured heart. He seated Antar by him

and talked familiarly with him and asked what had happened.

"O my Lord," Antar replied, "I demanded of my father the rank and honor of an Arab. But he has abused me and beaten me, and wished to kill me, and has made me a laughing-stock among the nobles!"

"You have been wrong," said Malik, "in this sad affair. You have done that which would not, in any case, have induced him to acknowledge you."

"Do not, my lord," replied Antar, "reprove me for my ambition, which often robs me of my wits and discretion. Had I not been intoxicated, this would not have happened, and I should have concealed my wishes and submitted patiently to my misfortunes.

"But I am unstrung by my love for my cousin Abla, and she drives away sleep from my eyelids at night. Now my father has cut off my hope and misfortune has come upon me. I only demanded that I be recognized as his son in order that I might marry her. No joy remains to me now, and the light of day is become darkness in my eyes. I have no home but among the wild beasts and reptiles!" His agony increased and he wept and complained bitterly.

"Had I known this before," said Malik, greatly distressed and pitying him, "I might have helped you. But what was easy has now become difficult. Abla will be concealed from you from this day forward. I

fear also what your father will do. But I will tell the Chieftain, my father, who is interested in you, and we will see what may be done."

Thus he tried to comfort the hero. And Antar stayed in the Prince's tent the night through.

Chapter 4

AT daybreak Antar stole out of the prince's tent, mounted his horse, put on his armor and rode forth till he was far from the tents. He knew not where he was going for the heaviness of his heart. Sometimes he took the left and sometimes the right, and so he continued till a day and a night had passed.

Now it chanced that about noon on the second day he fell in with a band of some forty horsemen of his tribe, led by the warrior Gheyad, who were on a marauding expedition. Antar, who by now longed for action, joined with them as they rode.

Before long they came into the territory of their enemies the Cahtans, and there they saw a great quantity of cattle, with some high-raised tents and lofty pavilions. Many horses were running about, and

camels grazing, and it was apparent that the people were all unsuspicious of danger.

The Absians, after taking counsel, decided to attack at once. They instantly shook their lances and drew their broad curved swords. Then they rushed upon the encampment and began to drive away the horses and camels. Instantly there was a great commotion in the camp, the men arming and running out to protect their women and children. But the sons of Abs forced them back towards the tents, trampling them upon the ground and seizing their property and spoil.

Then Gheyad called out to Antar, saying, "Do you drive away the women and the cattle, and we will repulse all that dare to follow!"

So Antar set off, driving before him the captured women and the flocks. And he had with him certain slaves of the tribe of Abs who had been with the horsemen, to assist him in the driving. So they proceeded for some way, when lo! a horseman rushed out from a ravine in the rocks. He was mounted upon a colt black as ebony, very large, yet beautiful and compact, of a race much prized among the Arabs. His hoofs were as flat as the beaten coin. When he neighed he seemed about to speak, and his ears were like quills.

When Antar cast his eyes upon the horse and observed his speed and his paces and his uncommon

beauty he felt that no horse could surpass him. His whole soul longed to possess him. He forgot the raid and the plunder and galloped on till he approached the horseman. When the warrior saw that Antar was making towards him he spurred his horse, and it fled beneath him; for this was a renowned horseman called Harith, and a valiant hero.

Antar galloped after him till sunset, by which time they were far in advance of the party. Then Harith turned about to him, and waited till Antar had come quite close to him. And Antar called out to him and said:

"O young man, by the faith you bear, will you wait for me a while, and grant me a favor? I see that you are a noble horseman. Hear then what I have to say and give me an answer. I pledge my word for your safety."

"O stranger," answered Harith, "I trust to your promise, seeing that you also are a valiant knight. What do you want with me?"

"Will you sell me this horse you are riding?" asked Antar, "or will you give it me if you are the owner of it?"

"By heavens," answered Harith, though he smiled at the courteous form of the question, "did you ever see any one surrender his horse and his armor on a plain like this, alone and a stranger? Know that this

horse is of a lineage as fine as that of the noblest warriors. He flies without wings, and brings safety to his master in all hazards. Abjer is his name. His sire was Wasil and his dame Hemama. Chosroe, emperor of Persia, and the princes of Greece have desired him.

"I am not of the tribe whom you have attacked, but their guest only, for I quarreled with my own people. But I have remained with them a long time, and my heart is attached to them, so that I am sore distressed by their capture. I am no coward in the assault of horses, but I am afraid lest this horse might receive a blow that would injure him, for he is as yet young for battle. Therefore I only followed you, in order to draw off your attention till the men of the tribe might overtake you and pursue you over the wilds and hills, and that I might point out to them your course. For you have attacked a tribe where there are at home only women and a few men, unable to encounter so fierce a foe. And I do not perceive that there is a single feeling heart among you all."

When he had finished speaking Antar said again: "It is my great wish that you sell me this horse. Demand what you please from me, for I must be the purchaser of him."

"O young man," answered Harith, "if you truly desire to purchase this horse, which is beyond all price, I will sell it, but only for all your booty. Even so,

you may be assured that you will not lose by the bargain. I have been a guest of this tribe, I have eaten their salt, and it is my wish to ransom their property with my horse. Had it not been for this misfortune, never would I have parted with him."

When Antar heard these words he knew that Harith was an honorable and liberal-minded man, and he wished to be equal with him in generous conduct.

"So be it," said he. "I will purchase the horse of you for all the booty. And moreover I shall be exceedingly grateful. Here is my hand in faith and sincerity."

So they rode back together till they came to the women and the cattle. There Harith dismounted. Sadly he spoke for the last time to Abjer and fondled him. Then he gave him to Antar. And Antar took him and mounted upon his back, where he sat like a great king. Then he gave orders to the slaves that they should conduct the women and flocks to their own country. Harith took them, and when he had taken leave of Antar, he went his way with them.

Now when Gheyad and the other warriors came up and saw Antar sitting alone upon Abjer, they abused him and demanded the plunder. High words arose and, though Antar promised to capture for them booty of even greater value, they would not listen, but decided to attack him.

Antar therefore retired a little distance from them, and dismounting tightened the girths on Abjer. Then he mounted again and circled and galloped about. At last he stood before them, ready; and he said these words:

"My tribe is leagued with fortune to demand my blood. They assault me with sword and spear.
They have driven me from the mistress I love, and I am plunged into the well of the water of banishment.
What care I now for life or death?

Yet, O God, let not my life be a life of ignominy; let not my death be among the weeping crowd!
Let the birds hover over my corpse, and let the crows of the desert drink of my wounds!

Whoever of you, O Tribe of Abs, wishes my death, I will appear before him on the plain of battle.
I will charge him on my stern-faced steed!"

When the Absians had heard these words, and saw how terrible in his despair he stood before them, they were afraid and shrank from combat. So they took counsel together, and Gheyad said, "Wise is the man between whom and Antar there is no contention!" And the others agreed.

Therefore Gheyad went to Antar and, laughing, said:

"O my cousin, are you not ashamed to engage in battle against your cousins, when they were only joking and making merry?"

Antar saw they were afraid of him and took the better part of valor.

"O nobles!" he replied, "I have not forgotten your kindness, and I am but your slave. Had it not been for you, I should not be known among the Arabs."

"He has indeed purchased this horse," said Gheyad, still seeking peace, "in order to defend us against our enemies. Let us therefore grant it to him."

"Be it so," said they all.

Thus Antar became possessed of Abjer, whose equal no prince or emperor might boast.

2

After this they rode on together in search of further fortune, though Antar, fearing treachery, rode a little apart from them. But fate was kind to them and presently they came upon a rich wedding procession, the bride in her high camel-litter decorated with gold and bright-colored stuffs, and all her dowry on beasts following her. The party was defended by sixty horsemen.

"This has been sent us by providence in recompense for what has befallen us!" cried Gheyad.

They instantly bent their heads over their saddle-bows and attacked the party. Antar in the forefront did such deeds of valor that soon of the sixty horsemen there remained only two or three, who fled away over the desert.

Then Antar said to the other Absians: "This booty is more valuable by far than that for which I purchased Abjer. Do you take it, as I promised; for though you dealt treacherously by me and wished to kill me, yet my word is given."

"Verily," answered Gheyad, "our cousin is generous as he is valiant!"

"Moreover," went on the hero, "since two or three horsemen escaped to give the alarm, you will be overtaken by the bride's people. Therefore, though I return no more to my tribe, yet will I accompany you to the confines of our country in order to protect you."

So they turned towards home, making all haste, and driving the booty before them. And it fell out as Antar had foreseen, for scarcely had they arrived at the edge of the land of Shurebah, where dwelt the Absians, when a cloud of dust arose which darkened the sky. Five hundred angry horsemen had come, determined on rescue and revenge.

Now when they saw how great a concourse was

upon them Gheyad and his companions were filled with terror, and they turned their horses and fled away, leaving the booty. Antar looked after them as they fled, a strange smile on his swarthy face. Then he bent to caress the gallant horse he rode.

"O Abjer!" he cried, "now is come your first great battle, and mayhap your last. For what is it to me, who am disgraced before my tribe and torn from my love, that death should overtake me? Yet will I sell my life dearly, that my fame shall live after me. Bear yourself worthily, O Abjer!"

Then he spurred forward to meet the horsemen.

And the gallant horse heard him and understood. He started forward like a flash of lightning or a tearing arrow. His eye-balls turned red and foam issued from his lips. He shrieked aloud in front of the horses and struck such terror to them that the foremost shrank back upon their haunches and hurled their riders from their backs. Antar too set his terrible war-cry echoing across the plain. "O by Abs! I am ever the lover of Abla! Prepare for death!"

Now the warriors were amazed and those in front held back. But those in the rear pressed forward and presently the whole pack was about Antar, surrounding him and pressing in upon him. But he met them as the parched ground receives the first of the rain. The corners of his eyes grew fiery red and he roared

aloud. Wherever he smote he cleft a head. Every warrior whom he attacked he killed. And when they still pressed round him he tore a rider from the back of his horse and, whirling him in the air above him, he struck down a second with him, so that the two died together.

"By thine eyes, O Abla!" he cried, "to-day do I defend my honor!"

Yet in spite of his strength and courage so great was the number of his enemies, and so deep their rage, that the hero had undoubtedly met the death he sought, had not a second cloud of dust appeared, and in the forefront of it Prince Malik, mounted on a horse that moved like a cloud. Like an eagle he seemed, handsome and in the bloom of youth, and he cried:

"O by Abs! O by Adnan!"

Now when Antar saw the prince whom he loved, the desire to live revived in him. New strength ran through his veins, already weary with the combat. He attacked more violently than the whirlwind and spread death about him like the sand-storm.

And when the enemy saw his terrible power, and that the tribe of Abs was coming to his rescue, they said one to another: "When Antar was alone we could not overcome him, and what shall we do now that his

rescuers have come?" So they fled away in confusion, and dispersed over the wilds. And the Absians pursued them and slew many and recaptured the scattered cattle and plunder.

Antar dismounted from Abjer, and running to Prince Malik, wished to kiss his feet in the stirrup. But Malik would not permit him, and kissed him between the eyes and rejoiced in his safety. And there was not one of the Absians but came up to Antar and congratulated him on his victory. So, when they had rested, they turned towards home.

Antar rode beside Prince Malik and told him all that had occurred. And the prince said to him:

"When you stole out of my tent in the morning, and came not back, I went to my father the Chieftain and I told him how you had demanded of Shaddad that he acknowledge you as his son, and of how he had beaten you in reply. And my father instantly sent for Shaddad, who came and kissed the ground.

" 'Why do you not grant Antar's request and call him your son, as every one else does?' asked Zoheir. 'Think you, Shaddad, that among the tribes there is a more intrepid warrior than your son or a bolder heart than his?'

"But Shaddad answered, 'Never has such a thing been done.'

" 'Never had Arab a son like Antar,' answered Zoheir. 'Moreover because a good deed is new it is not therefore to be despised.'

"Then said Shaddad: 'O my lord, he is indeed my son and a part of my heart, but my brother Milik, who hates him and will not give him his daughter Abla, said to me, "If you acknowledge Antar as your son I will leave the tribe and set forth into the wilderness." Therefore, for my brother's sake, I do not acknowledge him.'

"When I heard this," Prince Malik continued, "my heart wept. And at this moment a horseman came running with news that you were fighting alone in the desert against five hundred warriors. So I hastened to your defense!"

Antar thanked the prince for all his kindness, and rejoiced in his heart.

Now when they approached their own camp the Chieftain Zoheir came out to meet them, and with him was Shaddad. And Antar, when he had thanked Zoheir for his protection, ran to his father and kissed his foot in the stirrup and said:

"O my lord, I am come begging forgiveness. I am still your slave, and never will I presume again!"

Now when Shaddad heard these words, and saw his humility and considered his wonderful intrepidity and his truly Arabian nobleness of soul, he was deeply

moved and said in his heart, "Verily, no man has had a son like this!" And he kissed Antar between the eyes, and rode beside him.

When they were come to the camp the Chieftain awarded all the plunder to Antar, since Gheyad and the others had abandoned it. And Antar divided the rich booty between his father and his uncle Milik, who alone, with Prince Shas, had not congratulated him.

Then Antar made a song in honor of the Chieftain, and so beautiful was it that Zoheir's heart was touched. He thanked Antar with emotion, and gave him presents of two female slaves, two strings of jewels, and flasks of rare perfumes.

Thus the hero returned in triumph to the camp he had quitted in disgrace.

3

That night Antar stayed long with the Chieftain. When at last he quitted the royal tents a bright moon rode down the western quarter and a fresh breeze from the desert stirred the bright-colored trappings of the tents. After the fury of battle, peace was in the air and a mood of softness came over the man. He longed to see Abla once more and his feet, unbidden, took him towards the tents where her family lived.

As he came near he was surprised to see strong lights coming from the door of the main tent, and at the door his mother Zabeebah met him.

"O mother," he asked, "what is the meaning of these lights at this hour of the night?"

And Zabeebah answered him: "The men are all away in the desert, and the women are watching till this hour hoping to see you, and to hear from your own lips the story of the battle. And Abla is more delighted than any of them."

When he heard this Antar rejoiced in his heart and a smile lighted up his face. Immediately he went into the tent. As soon as the women saw him they rose up with exclamations of gladness and saluted him. Semiah, his father's wife, kissed him and said,

"O Antar, you have been long with the Chieftain, and we are sitting up on your account."

"Mistress," answered the hero, "I knew nothing of this, else would I not have tarried, even though my legs had been tied and fettered!"

Then they asked for the story and he gave it. The women listened with glistening eyes and rejoiced in his strength and his mighty feats.

Abla was with the others, listening, and she loved him for his courage and his eloquence. A sweet trouble was in her. Under Antar's glances she cast down

her eyes and knew not what to say. But at length she spoke.

"Tell me," she said lightly, for she dared not speak in earnest, "where is my share of the plunder? Or am I now of no consequence to you?"

At these words the sight of her loveliness overpowered Antar, and he also fell into confusion. Yet he answered gallantly:

"By the light of your eyes and the black of your eyebrows, O my mistress, your slave has this day taken booty a-plenty. But I gave it all to my father and yours. Yet has the Chieftain given me something for myself and gladly do I give it to you."

So he presented to her the female slaves and the strings of jewels. And he added: "The perfumes you do not need, for your breath is more delightful than they, and the perfume of your presence is more luscious!" And he divided the perfumes between the wives of his father and his uncles.

Then he asked where the men of the family had gone. It was Semiah who answered him:

"Know, Antar, that a warrior named Kais of the tribe of our enemies, the Cahtans, has invaded the land of our allies beyond us, and is even now returning to his own land through our territory. He has with him a great train of plunder and forty horsemen to guard

it. When your uncles Milik and Jewad, and Abla's brother Amru, heard this they decided to attack him under cover of night and to wrest from him the booty. They took with them ten horsemen. Shaddad is not with them, but is resting in his own tent."

When Antar heard these words he arose without delay, and kissing the mother of Abla and also Abla herself between the eyes, he said:

"This is the kiss of farewell, for I know not when we shall meet again."

When he had eased his heart by looking at his beloved, he went to his own tent, weary as he was, and put on his armor. He mounted Abjer and taking his brother Shiboob with him he set out after his uncles.

When they had gone some way Shiboob said to him, "O my brother, I have a message for you. Abla overheard her father Milik and her brother Amru talking together, and they were hatching a plot to kill you. She told Semiah, who sent the message to me. Now I have warned you, be on your guard!"

At these words Antar's heart grew heavy, and a sigh came from his lips. Yet he said:

"Run on, brother of the wind, lest we come too late."

Now Milik was of a crafty and deceitful nature, haughty and spiteful, and he hated Antar with a deadly hatred. From the hero's earliest years he had

despised him, and Antar's love for Abla had deepened his anger. Every honor which fell to Antar was wormwood to Milik, and he greatly feared that should the hero be exalted to the rank of an Arab noble he would not be able to keep him from marrying his daughter. More than once already he had tried to kill Antar, but each time his nephew had extricated himself from the danger.

These things Antar knew as he spurred Abjer across the plain, determined to aid him none the less. After a time they met a horseman, sore wounded, who staggered as he sat. And Antar knew him for one of the men who had gone with his uncles.

"Where are Milik and Jewad?" he asked, "and where is the plunder?"

"O Antar!" replied the other, gasping, "when we attempted to surprise Kais we found him carefully guarding the spoils. He fell upon us and, after wounding me, attacked your uncle Milik. I have returned to seek your help. Go quickly therefore and rescue them."

Now Antar sighed again and said in his heart, bitterly, "When they are safe together my uncles call me the swarthy son of a slave, but when they are in danger, then am I the son of the noble Shaddad, and they call upon me in their distress!" And he said to the horseman, "Go away home, and I will revenge you."

But the man answered, "I am not able to keep the seat on my horse."

Therefore Antar ordered Shiboob to lay him beside a pool of water, and to tether his horse for him. When Shiboob had done this they pressed on till they came up with the party of Kais. And there Antar saw his uncles and his cousin Amru tied across the horses of the enemy.

A great rage came upon him at the sight and he rushed to the combat, roaring and crying aloud, "I am Antar, lover of Abla! Quit your plunder for death is upon you!"

So great was the hero's ferocity and so swift his vengeance that he made short work of the rescue. And here is recorded of him for the first time a deed which he was many times to perform again. For he struck Kais with his sword so fierce a blow that the man was split in half even to the pommel of his saddle. The others fled in terror and Antar liberated his uncles.

Now when Milik and Amru saw what Antar had done, they trembled and were afraid, and from this day their dread of Antar and their hatred of him increased. For there are natures which are maddened by the sight of nobility. They said within themselves, "O that we had fallen by the sword, rather than be rescued by this slave of Shaddad's!" And this they

thought, although they themselves had sent for him. But Jewad was grateful, and thereafter took no part against Antar.

Yet Milik and Amru dissembled, and concealed their anguish, appearing to be stout of heart, and grateful to Antar. So they traveled home together. And Antar divided his portion of the spoils between his uncles and Amru and left them, his heart heavy within him.

Yet for all the hero's generosity Shaddad did not acknowledge him as his son, and from that day Abla was kept hidden from his sight.

Chapter 5

NOW there is much grist in the old saying, "The Lord helps those that help themselves." And so it proved with Antar. More than once in the hero's life the Lord sent him an opportunity which he was not slow to grasp. In such a manner did he find his great sword Dhami, whose blows sent many a warrior to death, and whose fame alone terrified before its bite was felt. In this fashion it came about.

When Antar found that in spite of his efforts on his uncle's behalf he had gained nothing, and indeed had been refused the sight of his beloved, sadness descended upon him, and he decided to go forth on a marauding expedition of his own, in search of new adventures. He therefore set forth and rode for two days without meeting anything of moment.

But on the third day, chancing to stray a little out of the route, he descended into a deep valley. There he saw two horsemen engaged in a desperate combat. He spurred Abjer till he came up with them, and he cried out:

"Stop, O Arabs! and tell me the cause of your quarrel."

On the instant one of them stepped aside, and coming to Antar, made appeal to him.

"O noble horseman," he said, "I refer myself to you, and I seek your protection."

The horseman was a comely youth, straightforward in manner and courteous in approach; and Antar was pleased by him. But the other had an evil face.

"I will take your part," said Antar to the youth, "and I will protect you. I pledge myself to you. But tell me now your story, and what rendered necessary this combat between you."

"Gladly!" answered the youth. "Know then that this horseman and I are brothers, of the same father and the same mother. He is the elder and I am the younger. Our father was one of the chieftains of the Arabs.

"Now we had in our line a famous ancestor called Teba, and with Teba the story begins. One day in counting his flocks he noticed that a certain camel was missing, and as he was very partial to it he questioned

the herdsmen about it. One of them then made answer:

" 'O my master, yesterday this camel strayed away from the pasture. I followed after it, and it still continued to run away. I ran after it till I was tired, but could not turn it. Therefore I stretched out my hand and took up a stone, black in appearance, like a hard rock, brilliant and sparkling. This I flung at the camel, and it struck him on the right side and issued out at the left, so that the camel fell on the ground dead. On coming up to it I found the stone by its side, and the camel was weltering in its blood.'

"On hearing this my ancestor Teba mounted his horse, and taking the herdsman with him, went to find the pasture. They passed on till they came to the camel, which they found half devoured by jackals, and the stone lying near it. Teba took it in his hands and considered it very attentively; and he knew it was a thunderbolt. So he carried it away and returned home. He gave it to a blacksmith and ordered him to make a sword of it. In three days the man returned with a great sword two cubits long and two spans wide. Teba received it, and was greatly pleased with it. Turning towards the blacksmith, he asked:

" 'What name have you given it?'

"And the blacksmith answered:

" 'The sword is sharp, O son of the burning desert,
Sharp indeed. But where is the smiter for the sword?'

"Then Teba my ancestor waved the sword in his hand and he cried:

" 'As to the smiter—I am the smiter!
The sword I name Dhami, Dhami for sharpness.'

"He caused it to be cased in gold, and he wrought many valiant deeds with it. When he died it was laid by among his treasures, and it has ever descended in the family, and been our most favored possession. In time it came to my father with the rest of the goods.

"Now when my father felt that his death was at hand he called me to him privately. 'O my son,' he said, 'I know that your brother is of a tyrannical and obstinate disposition, one who likes violence and hates justice, and I am aware that at my death he will usurp my property.'

" 'What measures shall I take?' I asked him.

" 'Take this sword and conceal it, and let no one know anything about it. When you see that he takes forcible possession of all my property, cattle and wealth, do you be content, my son, with this sword. For it will be of great benefit to you. If you present

it to Chosroe, Emperor of Persia, he will exalt you with his liberality and favors. And if you present it to the King of Europe he will enrich you with gold and silver.'

"When I heard these words I consented to what he asked. I took the sword Dhami out in the darkness of the night, and having buried it in this place, I returned to my father and stayed with him till he died.

We buried him, and returned home. He knew my brother well, for no sooner was he buried than my brother took possession of all my father had, and gave me nothing—not so much as a rope's end.

"When he searched for the arms, and saw that Dhami was gone, he asked me for it. I denied knowing anything about it, but he gave me the lie and abused me so savagely that at last I confessed, and told him that I had buried it in such a spot. So he came with me hither, and searched for it but could not

find it, for indeed I must have been confused when I buried it in the darkness. And when he saw me roaming about from place to place he cried out, saying: 'O vile wretch! you know where the sword is, and act thus to deceive me!' And he would not believe that I knew not. Then he attacked me and sought to slay me. I defended myself till you came, and now again I ask your protection."

Thus ended the youth, and Antar saw that he spoke the truth. The hero's heart was filled with pity, and turning to the brother, he said:

"Why do you thus tyrannize over your brother, and do not divide with him the property which your father left?"

"Base slave!" cried the man furiously, "look to yourself, and do not interfere so arrogantly!" And he turned upon Antar, thinking him a common man.

But Antar gave him no time to wheel, or direct his reins, but pierced him through the chest with his spear, and thrust it six spans beyond his back, so that he fell down dead.

"And now, young man," said he to the younger brother, "return to your family and assume the rank of your father. And should any one molest you, send and inform me, Antar, and I will come and tear his life out of his sides."

When the young man heard to whom he was in-

debted—for already Antar was known far and wide—he was filled with joy. He thanked the hero and fittingly expressed his gratitude. Then he said:

"Now that my brother is no more, I have no other enemy." And he departed home.

But Antar fixed his spear in the ground and dismounted from Abjer, and sat down to rest himself, for he had ridden far. As he sat he turned over the sand with his fingers, and in doing so he touched what he took to be a stone. But when he looked closely, behold! it was the hilt of the sword the youth had been seeking. He cleared away the sand about it, and drew it forth. It was indeed a sword two cubits long and two spans wide, of dark metal like a thunderbolt.

And Antar was convinced that everything began and ended in the Lord, and that the Lord was with him.

Thus the hero came into possession of the sword Dhami.

2

Yet though this expedition brought him Dhami, it came nigh to losing him a far greater treasure. And this was the way of it.

There was among the Tribe of Abs a chieftain by the name of Rebia, a great noble and very rich; and this Rebia was an old enemy of Antar, who had once

worsted him in a dispute before Zoheir. For it must not be supposed that so great a hero could live without enemies. Yet withal Rebia feared the powerful and uncontrollable warrior which Antar had become.

Now Rebia, who was a harsh man, had a brother by the name of Amarah who was of another sort. Amarah, though also a wealthy noble, was a great coxcomb, very particular in his dress, fond of perfume, and always keeping company with the women and the young girls.

While Antar was away Amarah happened to hear the praises of Abla much sung, in the verses which Antar had made of her, and a passion was kindled in his heart, so that by hearsay he fell violently in love with her. His ears fell in love before his eyes.

Therefore he sent for an old woman of his family and said to her:

"Go to the tents of Milik and discover for me whether what they say of Abla be true. For if she is as beautiful and full of charms as Antar says, I shall demand her in marriage, and be lawfully wedded to her."

So the old woman went away upon her errand. For among the Arabs then, even as to-day, the women were kept within doors and no man who was not related to them was permitted to see their face, save only the slaves and servants. The old woman, then,

went as upon a casual visit, saying nothing of her real errand. An hour later she returned to Amarah and exclaimed:

"Blessed be the Lord! How great is His power and how fair are His works!"

"What mean you by this?" asked Amarah.

"O my master, the damsel is a miracle of beauty and loveliness! The Lord has bestowed upon her such beauty and charms as He has never yet bestowed on the daughters of the greatest kings."

At this the heart of the dandy beat violently. He instantly leaped up, put on his best clothes, perfumed himself all over and let his hair float down over his shoulders. Then he mounted a white-faced horse and set out for the tents of Milik.

Chance favored him, for on the way he met Milik himself with his son Amru. Drawing them apart into a quiet place he saluted Milik and said:

"O Milik, I seek a private word with you, for I come to you as a suppliant. Give me the hand of your daughter Abla in marriage, for indeed I am enamored of her charms."

He continued to press his request, promising a fabulous dowry in cattle, jewels and perfumes, till Milik was elated, and so transported with joy that his eyes filled with tears.

"O chief!" he said, "my daughter is your slave, and

I and Amru are the most obedient of your servants." And he stretched out his hand to Amarah and promised him his daughter.

Now when Amarah had returned to his own tent he informed his brother Rebia of all that had occurred. And Rebia was wroth.

"I shall not permit you to make such a connection!" he said. "Have nothing to do with these people, for if Antar hears it he will not leave a single man alive of our family."

This troubled Amarah for then, as now, the word of the head of the family was binding upon the other members of an Arab family. But he replied:

"And who, pray, is this Antar? Have I not a thousand slaves as good as he? If the foul wretch should presume to interfere with me I will show him the valor of Amarah the Munificent. I will show him what I will do with him!" And he continued to urge the matter till at last Rebia said:

"Antar is now absent from the camp. If you can arrange the matter to-morrow morning early (for it was now evening) and give her father the dower and marriage presents without delay, so that you may be admitted at once as an accepted suitor, I will consent. There will be an end of it, and Antar can do nothing."

Amarah thought this advice prudent, for in reality he stood much in dread of Antar, and feared that the

swarthy slave would kill him. So the next morning he went early to the tent of Milik and arranged the matter fully, promising the dower at once. Thus all was settled between them, and the whole camp knew of the betrothal.

Late that evening Antar returned with the sword Dhami, weary with much riding. He went to his tent and lay down. Then his mother Zabeebah entered. Antar, already half asleep, yet questioned her how Abla fared.

"God be with you, my son," said Zabeebah. "Speak no more of Abla, nor of that lovely form. If you are asleep, awake!"

Antar instantly leaped to his feet.

"What has happened to her?" he cried.

"The chief Amarah has taken her. Everything is completed but the giving of the dower and the marriage presents."

Antar was thunder-struck. "By the faith of an Arab, to-morrow I will kill that coxcomb!" he cried. And he raged and stormed like a mad elephant in a cage. But his mother pleaded with him and calmed him, till at last he promised to go on the morrow to his friend Prince Malik and ask his advice.

So early in the morning he went to the prince. He entered the tent and kissed the hand of Malik. The prince received him kindly and seated him by his side,

asking, "And have you passed a good night, Antar?"

"My night was a night of the damned!" cried the hero.

"What does this mean?" asked Malik.

So Antar told him what Milik had done, and how he had betrothed his daughter to Amarah while Antar was away. And he swore vengeance upon Amarah and all his family. The prince, who truly loved him, was dismayed. But he comforted Antar and promised to intercede for him with Shaddad and with the Chieftain Zoheir and see what might be done. At last Antar gave his word to do nothing till the prince had returned, and Malik departed.

Antar remained for some time in the prince's tent, but as the day advanced and the prince had not yet returned, he grew restless. He went out and walked about the camp, hoping to calm himself somewhat.

But fortune was against him, for on the way he met Amarah, with his attendants, who had just come from conferring with Abla's father. The dandy was dressed out in his finest raiment, his limbs were heavy with perfume and his hair flowed down his back. He was riding in a most coxcomical manner.

At sight of him Antar's blood boiled, and his heart pounded. But he remembered his promise and controlled himself. He attempted to pass by without speaking, but Amarah stopped him.

Now Amarah was in reality in great dismay at the sight of Antar, but being also very conceited, he plucked up courage and let his tongue run glibly on.

"Son of Shaddad," said he, "where were you last night? Your masters were seeking you. For I was there with them, and with Abla my betrothed, and having heard of your talent for verses, it was my intention to give you a robe of honor."

At this gratuitous insult the light became dark before Antar's eyes, and he forgot everything but his rage. He went up to Amarah.

"Amarah, I am not worthy of receiving a present from you," he cried, "but when you enter unto my mistress Abla, verily, vile wretch, I will wrench your neck from your shoulders! I will make yours the most fatal of marriages!" And in his distress he seized Amarah by the waist, heaved him up above his head and flung him to the ground, nearly breaking his bones. Amarah, coward that he was, fainted from fright.

Immediately there arose a great uproar among the tents and on the instant a crowd came running. Soon Prince Malik appeared, for news flies swiftly in such a camp, and he was afraid some mischief might befall his friend. He understood that Antar had been tried beyond his strength and came up with his drawn sword to join the hero, who stood firm with Dhami

in his hand, for the crowd threatened to attack him.

"By my faith!" cried the prince, "Antar is a rare onyx among people who know not its value nor worth. Come on, Antar, now for the family of Amarah! Let us finish the matter!"

"Were these people in any other place," answered Antar, kissing the prince's hand, "I would show you what I would do with them. But I wish no reproaches, and least of all that the Tribe of Abs should say that a slave had put his noble cousins to the sword."

Malik was amazed at him and his magnanimity. But before he could reply Rebia rushed up, for he also had heard what had befallen his brother. He rushed upon Antar to kill him. But the prince cried out:

"Stop, Rebia! or by the faith of a warrior I will spare not one of your family or your people!"

Matters were in this state when lo! the Chieftain Zoheir arrived, with many warriors. Attendants ran before him crying, "Hold! Fight not! You have put in motion the Chieftain himself, the ruler of the age!"

Now on that day Zoheir was unquiet in his mind, for he had just received word of a great impending battle, and the cause of it was this: When, a few days before, Antar and his companions had attacked the bridal party in the desert and had carried off the bride

and her dower, they had made for the tribe a most important enemy. Zoheir did not think of blaming Antar for this, since such attacks were the custom, but he regretted the result. For the bride had proved to be the daughter of a great chieftain of the Tribe of Tey, called for his fierceness the Blood Drinker. This chieftain had now gathered together all his men, to the number of five thousand, and was marching on the Tribe of Abs to destroy them. The Chieftain Zoheir was therefore troubled, and kept it secret till his plans should be formed. At that moment also word reached him of the trouble between Antar and Amarah and he feared lest at this inopportune moment dissension should arise among his own people. Therefore he mounted his horse and came to them.

When the Chieftain came up every one held back from the fray, and Rebia with Amarah, who had recovered from his faint, presented themselves before him. They and all the people unanimously cried out:

"O great chief, there is no security for us in your country, unless you permit us to slay the terrible swarthy slave Antar, for he rebels and revolts and no one but you can restrain him."

"O my cousins," answered Zoheir, "what has Antar done?"

Rebia came forward and told him that Amarah had demanded Abla in marriage, and what Antar had

done to him. The Chieftain saw that Antar had been ill-used for he knew of Antar's love, and like all the tribe, he had expected that this love would ultimately be rewarded. But observing how many complained of Antar, he asked:

"What is your intention that I shall do with him?"

"Either kill him or banish him, or send him back to tend the sheep and camels," they answered.

"As to killing him," replied the Chieftain, "I cannot submit to you, because he has eaten of our salt and our protection is on him. And as to banishing him or sending him back to tend the sheep and the camels, that does not depend upon me. It is Shaddad's affair."

So Zoheir sent for Shaddad, and when he came said to him:

"These people are much exasperated against your son. But you have the entire disposal of him. Therefore do as you please with him, and I will witness for you."

"I am quite bewildered and distressed about this business," replied Shaddad, "but my opinion is that he should return to the care of the sheep and camels, and repent of his conduct." And turning to Antar he went on, "You wicked slave! Will you never cease to bring trouble upon me? It is my will that you return to the care of the flocks, for I will not irritate the

whole tribe and submit to you. I will not molest my brother Milik and obey you."

When Antar heard his father's orders the tears gushed from his eyes, and he regretted greatly what he had done. Yet he answered humbly:

"Do as you will, for I am your servant, and a slave has only to obey his master, though that master torment and afflict him every day of his life. From this day I will never mount a horse, and will never be present in battle, nor go anywhere but by your permission."

The Chieftain and others witnessed this promise. So this flame that had blazed for a moment was extinguished, and Antar's enemies, especially the family of Rebia, exulted over his humiliation.

"And now, my cousins," said the Chieftain, "prepare your warlike instruments this instant to fight the Tribe of Tey, who are coming down upon us with five thousand horsemen, on account of the daughter of the Blood Drinker, to release her from slavery and indignity." When they heard this the warriors all departed to make their preparations.

But Antar rejoiced and was glad at heart, for he knew the Tribe of Abs would be beaten and routed, and that they would be in want of him. He therefore went home and entered his mother's tent and asked if she knew aught of Abla.

"Abla was with me just now," answered Zabeebah, "and she said, 'Soothe the heart of my cousin Antar, and tell him from me that if my father even makes my grave my resting place, none but him do I desire, none but him will I choose!' "

And these words more than repaid him for all the humiliation he had suffered.

That night he stayed at home and the next day he took his brother Shiboob and went to the pasture, driving the cattle and camels before him.

But the Chieftain mounted his horse with all the warriors of the tribe, in number four thousand, all armed and accoutred, and set out to meet the Tribe of Tey. He left in the tents for the protection of the women and the property three hundred horsemen under the command of his son Prince Shas, and among these were Shaddad and Milik, Rebia and the coxcomb Amarah.

He traversed the desert, and the Tribe of Abs remained in safety for one night. The next day Antar again conducted the flocks to pasture with Shiboob. Scarcely were they gone from camp when a great cloud of dust arose which darkened the whole country. It was the Tribe of Tey, who had missed the Chieftain on the road and had reached the land of Shurebah, where the Absians dwelt, like a blazing flame.

"What is your counsel now, O Shiboob?" asked

Antar, for in matters of cunning Shiboob was a master.

"If you listen to my advice," said Shiboob, "you will to-day obtain all you desire, and will be admitted to the rank and nobility of an Arab. My advice is that you take your father's camels and cattle and go up on the slopes of Mount Saadi. I will bring you your horse and armor. But do not mount your horse, do not take part in the contest, till your father admits you to his rank and till your uncle gives you his daughter's hand in marriage. Then descend and destroy your enemies. So shall you attain the object of your desires."

This counsel pleased Antar, and he accordingly drove the cattle to the mountain, while Shiboob returned in secret for Abjer. Then they sat down to watch the result of the contest.

The Teyans advanced and overran the pastures of the Absians, driving off the cattle and putting the herdsmen to the sword. The whole country was filled with them. But some of the herdsmen escaped and ran to the camp, spreading the alarm.

Then Prince Shas called out the warriors and assembled the men. "Come on, my cousins," he cried, "let us fight for our women and our tents, since the enemy has passed my father on the road. Here noth-

ing will save us from the cup of death but the blows of the sword!"

Then the warriors took heart and met the enemy. For long they held them at bay. Yet since they were but three hundred and the Teyans five thousand, at last they were too sorely pressed and the enemy overwhelmed them. Shas and Rebia and Amarah were all wounded. At last they abandoned the fight and began a retreat into the wilds, leaving the camp to the enemy.

"Alas!" said Abla's father Milik to Shaddad as they fled, "where is Antar? Let him come to us in such a dreadful day as this and liberate us from misery and death!"

"We cannot raise our heads towards Antar," answered Shaddad, "though were he here our case would be far otherwise."

But he looked about despairingly, and raising his eyes towards Mount Saadi, he saw Antar and Shiboob seated on the ground and contemplating the defeat of the Absians. So he ran towards them, Milik following him.

"Can you," he cried to Antar when he came up with him, "in an hour like this employ yourself in herding sheep and camels? Behold what the enemy has done to the Tribe of Abs!"

"What do you wish me to do?" asked Antar

suavely. "I am indeed grieved at your distress. O that I might rescue you from defeat and destruction! But I am a slave, one who conducts cattle and camels to the pastures, one employed in picking up wood. I am contemptible and despised." Thereupon he rose and went away from his father and Milik.

Shaddad was angry. He ran after him and upbraided him. "What means this indifference?" he cried. Then Antar turned and asked again, "What do you want of me?"

"Mount, descend, destroy the enemy!" cried Shaddad, "and I will grant you all your wishes and hopes. I will raise you to the rank and honor of an Arab noble."

But Antar was not yet convinced. "What will this rank and honor be?" he asked coolly.

"I will recognize you as my son, and a part of my heart! You shall share my wealth and be the most honored among us."

While this was going on between them the Teyans attacked the tents and plundered the property and goods and captured the women of the tribe, even the women of the Chieftain Zoheir. They seized Semiah and Abla, and great was the wailing of Abla when she found herself seized by a horseman. Even to the ears of the four on the mountain her screams penetrated, above the din and confusion.

Milik her father, seeing and hearing this, wept and wrung his hands.

"O my nephew," he pleaded with Antar, "can you see your beloved Abla captured and not defend her?"

"If I mount this instant," said Antar, "and destroy our enemies, and free Abla, will you give her to me in marriage?"

"Yes!" cried the wretched Milik, "I swear it by the God who made her beauty and her charms." And he stretched forth his hand to Antar, and swore, and said, "If you liberate Abla she shall be your wife forever!" Shaddad also admitted his claim to rank and honor and swore he would not deny him again, were the foe to tear his body to pieces.

Then Shiboob brought forward Abjer. "Now mount, my brother," he said, "for you have no more to say to your father and your uncle. Put to rout these hateful foes!"

Antar clad himself in armor and mounted upon Abjer. And he was like a tower, or a mass rent from the mountain's side. He rushed impetuously down from the height, his heart harder than stone and his soul more buoyant than the waves of the sea when it roars. He shouted with a voice so loud that the whole country and its valleys trembled at the shock: "I am Antar, the son of Shaddad! I am ever the lover of Abla, and I cannot be restrained!"

He bent his head over the saddle-bow and began his attack. First he sought the horseman who had captured Abla. He wished to pierce him through the chest, but he feared the point might touch Abla, and she be slain with him. So he wheeled his horse on one side, and pierced him through his right side. The point of the spear issued out of his left side, and the warrior fell, weltering in his blood. Abla was terrified, but she was unhurt. Antar dismounted and came to her.

"Fear not, light of my eyes," he said, "to-day shall you behold your Antar perform such deeds that they will be recorded in history. Fly now, and await the result."

Again he rushed upon the enemy, and Shiboob with him shooting arrows with which he transfixed the hearts of the enemy.

Now the warriors of the tribe under Prince Shas, who were retreating hard pressed, heard his voice through the confusion and thick dust. They rejoiced and said one to another, "Antar! Antar is here!" Then they took courage, and gathered themselves together, and returned to the attack. They wheeled their horses towards the sound of his voice and came in behind him. Antar made straight for the tents, which the enemy warriors were busy plundering, and bore down upon the despoilers like the sand-storm.

He rushed down upon them and destroyed them; he overwhelmed them with shouts and blows, with horror and death. He hewed off their arms and their limbs, and God prospered him in all he did, so that he slew all he aimed at, and overthrew all he touched.

Soon the plunderers fled, leaving the tents to the Absians.

Then Antar plunged into the midst of the great body of the Teyans, searching for one of their warriors who was the leader of the troops. This man was eminent for his bravery. It was he who had wounded Prince Shas and destroyed many Absians, and had sent them to defeat. But Antar continued slaughtering and searching for him till he overtook him, and did not give him time to turn or move his bridle, but struck him with Dhami upon the breast, dividing him down to the thong that encircled his waist, so that he fell over, cut in twain.

Now when the Blood Drinker saw this he was confounded, and said to the troops about him, "This is no mortal man! All that have dared him have drunk of the cup of perdition!"

Then he searched for his daughter, whom he had come to liberate, and as soon as he had found her he set her on his horse behind him, and withdrew his troops. "I have that for which I came," said he, "let

us no longer tempt fate." So the Teyans returned to their own country.

But the Absians returned in triumph to their own tents, Antar at their head, red as the flowering Judas-tree from the blood upon his garments and his body, yet his heart soaring like the eagle for joy and exultation. And as they went he sang, as was the custom among the Arabs, a song of victory, a bragging song, in this wise:

"I am the warrior of whom it is said, 'He tended the
he and she camels of his tribe,'
I am Antar the invincible slave!

I am he that makes the warriors throw away their
arms in terror of me, when they behold me robed
in black gore.
I am the death that never rushes into the fiery battle
without a tongue to speak.
The son of Shaddad am I, with a heart for every
enterprise.

High is my fame; exalted is my glory.
The fortune of my star is suspended from heaven!"

When they approached the tents the women came out to meet them, beating the cymbals, and the slaves

brandishing their swords. And Abla stood in front of them like the full moon when it shines, and she cried:

"Welcome, Antar my cousin! May I never lose you, O defender of women, and destroyer of every savage enemy!"

And Antar felt himself rewarded.

3

The next day the Chieftain Zoheir arrived in haste with his warriors, having heard that he had missed the enemy on the road. As he approached the camp he saw dead bodies scattered about, with stark horses, their legs straight in the air, and broken spears and armor. His heart misgave him.

But when he reached the tents the chiefs came out to meet him, and told him what Antar had done. When he heard this he rejoiced exceedingly, and said, "Verily, by the faith of an Arab, we are glorified in Antar above all that inhabit the desert!" And when the hero came to meet him, Zoheir kissed him between the eyes and said: "O Antar, we are unable to reward you for this act, even were we to give you all we possess!"

The next day the Chieftain ordered camels and sheep to be slaughtered and a magnificent entertain-

ment to be prepared for all the tribe. The most highly honored were Antar and the warriors of his family. After feasting, Shaddad told the Chieftain all his son Antar had done, and how he himself had acknowledged his relationship, and Milik had promised the hero Abla in marriage.

Now Prince Shas, who had hated Antar since he slew the black slave Daji, and Rebia and Amarah were also present, and they felt their galls swell with rage.

"Shaddad," said Shas, "how could you take upon yourself to introduce Antar, the son of a slave and a camel-tender, to our tribe and admit him to our rank and consequence? Now we shall become a shame among the Arabs to the end of time!"

Then Antar rose and addressed the Chieftain. "O my lord," he said, "the heart of Prince Shas is not inclined towards me. I will therefore retire from you and seek another tribe." And tears flowed from his eyes.

But Zoheir looked at him in astonishment. Then he rose and ceremonially kissed Antar, and thanked him. Then, turning to the warriors of Abs, he cried out in a loud voice:

"O Tribes of Abs and Adnan, all you who are here assembled, hear ye! You all know the purity of my connection and rank, my father and my mother, yet

let Antar be called as I am called, for he is, by my faith, my cousin. And he who despises him despises me!" Then he turned to Antar and cried again, "Welcome, welcome, my cousin, reliever of sorrow!"

Prince Malik at once sprang forward and followed suit, and after him all the tribe, save only the three malcontents who quitted the tent.

Thus Antar was received as a noble into the tribe, and it seemed that at last fortune had smiled on him and his dearest wish would soon be granted.

Chapter 6

BUT Antar had reckoned without his uncle, Milik the crafty.

For on the following day the hero's enemies, Milik and Amru his son, Rebia and Amarah, met together and said one to another, "What shall we do now?"

And Rebia offered a counsel. "Pretend to be good friends with Antar. Appear to be kind to him and do not prevent him from entering your tents. Then when he asks what you demand as a dower for Abla say: 'I only demand a thousand Asafir camels, that my daughter may pride herself in them above high and low.' And know, Milik, that camels of this breed are to be found only in the possession of Monzar, son of Massema, who is overlord of all the Arabs, and a lieutenant of the great Emperor Chosroe of Persia,

whose armies are innumerable. Antar, in the greatness of his courage, will go in search of them. He will expose his life to danger and death and you will never see him again."

Milik listened eagerly to this advice and determined to act accordingly. Therefore that night he received Antar with seeming affection, introduced him formally into his tents, gave him meat to eat and wine to drink, and spent part of the night in his company. Antar, in the simplicity of his heart, was delighted and thought that at last he should be united to Abla. And Milik continued this kind treatment for ten days.

Thus for ten days, ten golden globes of pleasure, Antar rejoiced in the company of his beloved. These days were the calm at the centre of the whirlwind, peace in the heart of battle. They were luscious fruit to be tasted slowly, and water in the thirsty desert. The hearts of the lovers were united, and their fingers clung together. Happiness was round them like a golden mist. Yet they thought the hours but the prelude to greater joy.

On the night of the eleventh Milik was more than usually kind to Antar, and plied him with wine till his blood was hot. Then said Milik:

"Tell me, what do you wish to be done for Abla? Do you intend to take her by force, and will you bring disgrace upon us?"

"That can never be!" exclaimed Antar. "God forbid that this guarded pearl, this concealed jewel, should be shamed. I am only waiting orders. Tell me what you demand, that I may get it for her and give her reason to pride herself above the chiefs of the earth."

And Milik: "I would not ask of you what is beyond your power to give, and I demand only what an Arab may demand, a dower in he and she camels. I ask a thousand Asafir camels, that my daughter may boast of them, for in our tribe there are none, neither in the land of our enemies the Cahtans. Thus shall you be united to her and we will live in perpetual felicity."

Antar, who knew not where the camels might be found, yet whom nothing daunted, agreed. "Uncle," said he, "I will give you these camels loaded with the treasures of their masters. Only give me your hand and betroth me formally to your daughter, and thus prove your faith to me." So Milik gave him his hand.

A fire blazed then in Antar's heart, his bosom heaved and he was all delight. He started to his feet, and taking off the embroidered robe of honor which the Chieftain had given him, he placed it on his uncle. This exposed the upper part of his body.

Now Abla was standing by, she also unsuspecting

the trick which her father had played. Seeing Antar thus she smiled.

"Delight of my eye, what are you smiling at?" he asked.

"At those wounds," she replied, "for were they on the body of any other person he would long ago have died. But you are unhurt by them."

Her words descended to his heart like sweet water, and at once he made a song for her.

"The pretty Abla laughed when she saw my swarthy skin, and that my ribs were wounded by the spears.
Do not laugh nor be astonished when the hostile warriors surround me!

The spear barb is like death in my hand, and on it are figures traced in blood.
Indeed I marvel that any one can see my form in the day of contests—and survive!"

Then he looked long at his beloved, and went forth into the night. And Milik's evil plan had succeeded.

2

Antar went to his mother's tent, awakened his brother Shiboob and told him to get ready Abjer.

He clothed himself in armor and stood like a tower.

"Where are you going?" asked Shiboob, "that I may show you the nearest way."

"Show me the road to the land of Irak," asked Antar, "for there is to be found what my uncle has demanded."

Now Shiboob trembled and was confounded, for he knew the country. "Why not wait till morning,"

said he, "and consult the Chieftain and Prince Malik?" But Antar answered, "Mine be the dark and nightly course, after the manner of mighty heroes; for if I travel by day they will lay plots against me." Then Shiboob agreed.

So they set forth, Shiboob showing the way, and rode the rest of the night and the next day. At evening they stopped by a well of water, where stood a tent. Here they found an old sheikh, his back bent with age. Antar's song of him is still sung.

"An old man was walking along the ground, and his face almost touched his knees.
'Why are you stooping, grandfather?'
'My youth is lost somewhere on the ground, and I am stooping in search of it.'"

The old man welcomed them and brought them milk cooled in the wind. He gave them meat and laid pillows for them. Then he asked why they were traveling and Antar told him.

"May God disgrace your uncle, and not save him!" exclaimed the old man, "for his only object in making this demand of you was to annihilate and ruin you!"

"How is that?"

Then the old man told him of the camels and where alone they might be found. And he advised him to return home and not expose himself to certain death.

Antar, who now knew the full perfidy of his uncle, bowed his head and remained the whole night through in great distress. Nevertheless when day dawned he thanked the old sheikh, and set forth resolutely.

They traveled on for many days till they reached the land of Hirah, where they saw populous towns, plains abounding in flowing streams, date trees and warbling birds, and sweetly smelling flowers. The

land was like a blessing to revive a sorrowing heart. Camels were grazing and straying about the land; and they were of various colors, not simply brown or white like the camels of Abs, but every shade from cream to deep russet, so that Antar thought them like flowers in a garden. There were he and she camels, young camels, and slaves to attend them.

When he saw these things the hero knew that in truth he was addressed to death, unless courage and steadfastness of purpose could guide him through.

"Shiboob," said he, "this is a land great in power. Nowhere is there a region to be compared with it. We have nothing for it but prudence and daring fortitude. Hasten then, son of my mother, and look for these Asafir camels, and mark them, while I rest Abjer."

So Shiboob left his bow and quiver, and presenting himself as a sick slave, went towards the pastures where he saw the camels like young brides. The slaves when they saw him greeted him kindly and made him sit down among them. They gave him to eat and asked who he was.

"I am a slave of the Tribe of Zebeed," dissembled Shiboob. "My master is a cruel man who has no compassion for his slaves, male or female. So I have run away and left him, and my hope is to meet some one who will protect me from him."

"Remain with us as long as you please," answered the slaves, "and welcome."

Shiboob thanked them fittingly and remained with them the rest of the day, filling their ears with tales till he had marked out the Asafir camels.

And he saw that these beasts were the marvels of the age. They were strong of back, long of stride, and they moved their fore-legs like a man swimming. Swift they were as ostriches, and their hind feet fell in the mark of their fore-feet on the ground. Their cheeks were as smooth as paper of Syria and their upper lips were like leather of Yemen, exactly and smoothly cut. They walked with graceful gait, as dancing girls walk, showing their masters the skirts of their trailing garments.

When evening came the slaves drove away the camels and sought their homes, and Shiboob went with them. But as they came near the tents he slipped away from them in the darkness and returned to Antar.

"Tell me," said his brother, "what news have you?"

"Nothing," answered Shiboob, "except that we are in a dangerous position, and under fate and destiny unless the Lord of Heaven is our protector."

"O Shiboob," said Antar, "it is well known that when a slave exposes his life to the abyss of danger he is exalted to the heights of glory."

Then they concealed themselves and waited till morning. When day dawned Antar clad himself in his armor and went forward to the pastures, crouching along as a wolf crouches after a sheep.

Presently the camels were driven forth to graze, and behind every thousand she camels were ten slaves to attend them, that the males might not annoy them. The slaves then began to amuse themselves, for they were slaves of the overlord of all the Arabs, and knew not what it was to be attacked.

"These are the Asafir camels," said Shiboob to Antar. "So make your plan and act as it seems best to you."

"Run on," answered Antar, "and occupy the road to Hirah, so that their cries shall not be raised against us before we are far away."

"As you please," answered Shiboob.

So he circled round the slaves till he came to a good place behind them. Then he knelt upon his knees, and emptying his quiver of arrows before him, he waited their attack.

But Antar urged forward Abjer and plunged among the he and she camels and cut off a thousand of the Asafir camels with his spear, crying out to the slaves, "Base-born ones, drive away these camels before me, or my sword will be stained with your blood!"

The slaves were terrified at his enormous bulk and his huge voice. They drove the camels before him and goaded them on, so that they fled before him like eagles. Nevertheless after an hour or two Shiboob came up with them. So they proceeded till the third hour, when lo! a cloud of dust appeared, and presently disclosed a great party of horsemen, some twelve thousand, who had been out hunting when they were apprised of the attack, and were now coming in pursuit. And they were under the command of Numan, eldest son of King Monzar.

When Antar saw them he smiled, for battle was his joy and delight.

"O Shiboob," said he, "do you guard the camels and drive them forward whilst I show you a day of horror among these warriors."

Then he went forward to the advancing army and attacked like a driving sand-storm. So savage was his attack, and so many did he slay, that for an hour he held the whole multitude at bay. And the foremost shrank back upon the rear, crying out at him from a distance, for no one dared to approach the spot where he stood. But the slaves rose against Shiboob and refused to drive the camels.

When Numan saw that his troops fell back before Antar he was greatly agitated and cried out to them. "May God disgrace you among the Arabs! Are you

reduced to this by a single man, a paltry herdsman! Take him and bring him to me!" The horsemen took courage and poured down upon Antar from all sides. But he never flinched, and was still making slaughter among them when his horse Abjer stumbled, and throwing him on the ground, rushed out from the thick dust and tumult, the saddle empty.

Shiboob, seeing this, thought that Antar was killed and trampled to death! Tears flowed from his eyes. He gave his feet to the winds and fled away into the wild desert, outdistancing all pursuers. So he continued, weeping and lamenting, till he came home to his own country, and reported that the great Antar had at last been slain.

Yet Antar was not dead. When his horse stumbled beneath him he started on his legs, he brandished his sword Dhami in his right hand and supported his shield in his left. So he renewed the attack and continued the slaughter. But he was wounded in many places and blood flowed from him. In the thickest of the battle he chanced to step upon a severed head, which rolled under his feet, so that he fell down at full length. His enemies gave him no time to rise before they fell upon him and bound fast his shoulders, his arms and his legs. Then they brought him before Numan.

3

Now Numan was astonished at this gigantic warrior, his terrific strength and the agitation of his eyes. He ordered his men to tie Antar across the back of his horse and to conduct him before King Monzar, who was not far off, also returning from the hunt. And Monzar likewise was confounded at the sight of this blood-stained giant.

"What Arab are you?" he asked of Antar.

"My lord, I am of the Tribe of Abs."

"One of its warriors," demanded Monzar, "or one of its slaves?"

"Nobility, my lord," answered the hero, "among liberal men is the thrust of the spear, the blow of the sword, and patience under the battle-dust. I am the physician of the Tribe of Abs when they are in sickness, their protector in distress, the defender of their wives and children when they are in trouble, their horseman when they are in glory, and their sword when they rush to arms."

Now Monzar's amazement grew apace, hearing these gallant words from his strange prisoner. "What urged you to do violence to my property?" he asked.

"My lord, the tyranny of my uncle obliged me to this act." And he told the whole story.

"Have you then," said the king, "with all this forti-

tude and eloquence, and propriety of manners, exposed your life to the sea of death for the sake of an Arab girl?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Antar. "It is love that emboldens men to encounter dangers and horrors, and what misfortune can drive a man to his destruction but a woman who is at the root of it?" Tears flowed from his eyes, and a song sprang to his lips. "O Abla!" he exclaimed,

"The eye-lashes of the songstress from the corner of the veil are more cutting than the edge of the scimitar.
When they wound the brave are humbled, and their eyes flood with tears.

O lightnings, waft my salutation to Abla, and to all the places where she dwells.
O ye dwellers in the forests of tamarisks, if I die, mourn for me when my eyes are plucked out by the fowls of the air.
O ye steeds, mourn for a warrior who could engage the lions of death in the field of battle.

Alas, I am an outcast, and in sorrow.
I am humbled in galling fetters, fetters that cut my soul!"

When he heard these words Monzar's heart was turned towards Antar, for the king was himself one of the most eloquent of the Arabs, and well known for his poetry.

Now as they were talking together suddenly the people around them began to flee away in disorder. "What means this?" demanded the king.

"A savage lion has appeared among us and is destroying the horsemen!" they cried. "Spears make no impression on him, and no one dares attack him."

"Assault him!" cried Monzar, "lest the ways be made unsafe, and we disgraced!"

As soon as Antar heard this his afflictions were relieved.

"Tell your people to release only my arms, leaving my legs still bound, and to expose me to the lion!" he said. "Then if he destroy me your honor will be avenged, for I have slaughtered your horsemen. But should I destroy the lion, do not refuse me justice."

Monzar gave the order and it was done. Antar grasped his shield and his good sword Dhami, and went jumping along in his fetters, covered with blood from head to foot and the corners of his eyes fiery red. And Monzar followed him to see what he might do.

When they came near the lion they perceived that it was an enormous creature, almost as large as a

camel. Its nostrils were broad, its face wide and its claws long. It grinned with its teeth clenched like a vise, and the corners of its jaws were like grappling irons. When the lion perceived Antar it crouched to the ground and extended itself along the way. Its mane bristled up and it made a spring at him.

Antar met him with his sword. "O by Abs, I will ever be the lover of Abla!" cried the hero as he struck. The sword entered by its forehead and cut clean through the beast, so that it fell down cut in two pieces, for the spring of the lion had aided in its own destruction. And it was all done in the twinkling of an eye. Then Antar calmly wiped his sword on the beast's mane and returned to the king.

"Verily," exclaimed Monzar to his attendants, "this man is the miracle of the time and the wonder of our age! His intrepidity and eloquence and perseverance are enough to confound the universe. With him I shall accomplish my wish upon Chosroe of Persia, and establish the superiority of the Arabs."

So he ordered Antar to be held an honorable prisoner till such time as he had need of him.

Now matters stood none too well between Chosroe, Emperor of Persia, and Monzar, his lieutenant among the Arabs, and this was the cause of it. Monzar was an intelligent man, very honorable in the administration of justice, and prudent in policy. For this rea-

son Chosroe had appointed him overlord of the Arabs, and treated him with respect and friendship, for the Chosroes of Persia were renowned for their love of justice and their impartiality. But a short while before the arrival of Antar a rift had appeared in their good will, made by the spite of a Persian warrior by the name of Khosrewan.

The matter came up during a visit of King Monzar to the court of Persia. This Khosrewan was always talking contemptuously of the Arabs and telling falsehoods about them, till at last he made an impression on the heart of Chosroe. Then he proposed to Chosroe this scheme.

"If," said he, "you wish really to understand this barbarian whom you treat as friend, and to have proof of his ignorance and ill-breeding, ask him to come and eat meat and dates. Order the servants to give him ordinary dates, and to set before you and the rest of us dates from which the stones have been extracted and the space filled with nuts and sweetmeats. Then see what he will do."

Chosroe agreed, and after dinner it was accordingly done. Chosroe and the Persians ate their dates and swallowed them, for there were no stones to throw aside. But Monzar thought within himself, "Most certainly to-day is a festival with them, for they are worshippers of fire. So I must eat like them and

fashion my manners to theirs." So he ate, and swallowed the stones.

But presently one was very sharp, and it puzzled him. Then all the courtiers burst into a loud laugh. And Chosroe also laughed. Monzar was abashed at their ridicule.

"What makes your attendants laugh, O king of the world?" he asked.

"You have eaten dates and swallowed the stones," answered Chosroe. "For that we are laughing." And he told Monzar of the trick.

Then Monzar was greatly enraged, and touched in his vanity.

"Why did you not give me some of what you eat yourself?" he demanded. "I am still your guest. Yet this is proof that I am an object of ridicule to you, and you have only invited me to mock at me. Nevertheless I am at all times your slave and indebted to your bounty for whatever you have thought proper to do to me." And he arose and quitted the table, and the country.

Now when he arrived in Hirah, his own country, he wrote letters to the heads of tribes allied to him and told them to attack the Persians within their reach. And they did so. Granaries and stores were attacked, villages plundered and many Persians were slain. Therefore Chosroe wrote him a letter, ad-

dressed to "Him whom we recognize as King of the Arabs." And the letter said, "Truly the heart of the just king is greatly irritated against you, on account of the depredations committed by the Arabs, your servants. You must slay the rebels and offenders if you are obedient to the Persian government. And peace be with you from the protecting fire."

But Monzar sent an answer as follows. "To him whom we recognize as the just King. Truly my character is despised among the Arabs and my authority among them is weakened since they heard what you did to me about eating dates. Because you have ridiculed me my power is at an end. The chiefs will no longer obey my commands. You must therefore look after your own country and mind your own administration."

When Chosroe received this answer he understood the whole contents. "Verily," he said, "these vagabond Arabs have turned against me. But if I do not degrade and humble Monzar, I am not the King of the Age!"

Then said Khosrewan, "Who is this Monzar that you should trouble about him? By your life, I will slay his horsemen and destroy his allies and take him prisoner. If you order me I will do this and return with most costly plunder."

"Khosrewan," said Chosroe, "all this is your doing,

and you are the person for the expedition. Therefore prepare, and march with the troops under your command. And if you conquer Monzar, kill him not, but bring him to me, that I may disgrace and punish him. After that I will grant him his life, since I too am not blameless in this matter."

Now at the moment when Antar was taken captive, King Monzar had sent his letter of defiance to Chosroe but had as yet received no answer. And he was waiting warily.

Some days later, therefore, when Antar's wounds had had time to heal, a great party of horsemen appeared from the direction of Persia, twenty thousand in number, with Khosrewan at their head. Monzar roused his forces and the two armies met in battle. But Monzar's men were only twelve thousand and after a day of savage fighting four thousand of them were slain, and the rest fled in confusion into the city of Hirah, and Monzar with them. As for the Persians they surrounded the city and rested for the night. And Khosrewan rejoiced exceedingly.

Now Monzar, gnawing his hands from rage and shame, remembered Antar and sent for him.

"O Absian," said he, "you have heard to-day the shouts and the attack of the enemy."

"My lord," answered the hero, "truly my gall was nearly bursting when I heard that you had been

obliged to fly from the enemy of the Arabs. It is a disgrace which can with difficulty be lifted from our race."

"What can men do," asked Monzar, "when double their number attack them and they are overwhelmed?"

"Man," said Antar coolly, "must patiently resist, and drink the cup of death as he would the purest water, and not run away. I am now your prisoner, and I demand of you the marriage dower of Abla, my uncle's daughter. Restore me my sword, my arms and my horse, and give me a thousand men to defend my rear. And you shall see what my courage and force will do to your enemies!"

"By the virtue of the Kaaba!" exclaimed Monzar, "if you perform what you state and destroy this army, all my property, my he and she camels, are at your disposal. Not one of us will remain behind, but we will all go with you against the foe."

So early in the morning when the Persians closed in, eager to plunder and slay, the Arabs went forth to meet them, and at their head was Antar the terrible.

It was a day of doom. From sunrise to sunset the battle continued, hidden under the clouds of dust. Men burst down upon one another. Skulls were hewn off. Blood deluged. Spears and swords were shat-

tered. The noble born were in their glory, but cowards retreated. Severed limbs strewed the plain. The dead were tossed about.

But above it all rang Antar's terrible war-cry, and through the thickest of it his deeds cut him a path.

At last the evening came and the Persians, discomfited, retreated to their tents in disorder. Then King Monzar received Antar with the greatest respect and affection. He seated the Absian beside him, kissed him between the eyes, and plied him with meat and drink. And Antar said:

"This day has Khosrewan himself not taken part in the combat. Now will I send him a challenge that he shall meet me in single combat. So shall this matter be settled." Monzar agreed and the challenge was sent. And Khosrewan, smarting under the defeat of his troops, agreed.

4

Now the next morning, when they had all risen refreshed, they prepared to renew the combat. The two armies were drawn up in battle array, but a space was left between them. Into this space rode Antar, mounted on Abjer; and as they moved between the lines of waiting warriors, fearful were they to behold. Abjer moved dark as the tides of water under moon-

light, while the lightning seemed to flash from his eyes. And Antar in his dark armor, his swarthy face aglow with the lust of battle, the corners of his eyes already fiery with rage, was like the messenger of death itself.

He lifted up his voice and cried aloud:

"Where is he who wishes to fight me, and wants to make me taste of the liquor of death? Bring him forth! Let him see what he shall meet from my spear under the shades of the battle-dust! I swear, O Abla, he shall eat of death!"

Now Khosrewan, in answer to the challenge, appeared upon the plain.

He was mounted on a long-tailed horse which bore on its forehead a white mark like the new moon. On his body the Persian wore a strong coat of mail, well knit together, of the workmanship of the people of David, and on his head an imperial casque. In his hand he carried a glittering sword and under his arms were four small darts, each like a blazing flame. A spear and a great club were slung beside him. When he came forth upon the field he roared aloud and cried insults to the Arabs.

But Antar rushed to meet him, gladly as a bridegroom goes to meet the bride, with a fierce joy in his heart. As he rode he uttered his terrible battle-cry that struck terror to all hearts.

"O by Abs!" he cried, "I am ever the lover of Abla. I will not be restrained!"

But Khosrewan feared him not, for he knew him not.

Then they rushed together like two whirlwinds. Swords flashed and horses trampled. Valiant blows were struck; yet neither at first gained the victory. Then a new tide rose in Antar and, even as he fought, he began to compose a poem. The words fell as the blows fell, and both together assailed the Persian.

"I am Antar!" he chanted,

"I am he whose might is uncontrollable in battle—
the valiant lion of the cavern.
I plunge into the flames of war with the gleaming
scimitar, and I feed them with the stabbing
lance."

Here Khosrewan struck him a strong blow with his sword, but the hero parried it and went on:

"I drive back the horses on their haunches from my
lofty seat on Abjer of the thin flanks.
I strike with the blade of my sword Dhami, at whose
edge flow the waves of death over the enemy."

Now the Persian was angered, and rushing in he strove to silence both words and blows. But Antar clung to him, and so the poem went on:

"My sword is my father, and the spear in my hand is my father's brother.
I am the son of my day on the heights of the desert.
Verily, night may be my complexion, but day is my emblem.
The sun itself is brother to Antar the Unconquerable!"

One more savage assault, and the poem was finished:

"This day shall you taste the bitterness of death!"

Now the dust of battle was rising from the plain and the watching legions could see but fitfully between its clouds how the battle fared.

Desperate was the combat. Both men showed the greatest prowess. They separated, they clung to one another. Now they sported as though in play, now they were in deadly earnest. They gave and took. They were close. They were apart. So they continued till it was mid-day and both were severely toiled.

But whenever Khosrewan tried to assail Antar and strike him with the great mace he carried, he found the hero vigilant and aware of the Persian's intent. Therefore Khosrewan broke away from Antar and galloped over the plain, trying by manœuvers and stratagems to win the victory.

But Antar kept him employed and wearied him, and prevented him from executing his designs, so that the Persian's rage mounted like wine to his head. He snatched up one of his darts and shook it and hurled it at Antar. It flew from his hand like the blinding lightning, or like descending fate. Antar stood firm. When the javelin reached him he met it, and dexterously turning it off with his shield, he caused it to bound away and fall on the ground far off. Khosrewan snatched out a second dart and leveled it at him, but Antar sprang out of its way and it passed harmless. The Persian hurled the third and the fourth, but they shared the same fate.

Now Khosrewan, between rage and weariness, was losing his judgment. He took up again his great mace, and stretching himself out with it, he hurled it with all his strength, roaring as he did so as a maddened lion roars, so that the great plain seemed to bellow with him.

Antar, seeing this, threw away his spear and stretched forth his right hand and met the mace, and

caught it in the air. Then, aiming it at Khosrewan, he cried out:

"Take that, you thing of ill omen! I am ever the lover of Abla, and there is none like to me, the Phoenix of the World!"

Khosrewan saw him grasp the mace in the air and was horrified, for his strength and courage were exhausted. He retreated, and attempted to fly from his antagonist, for he was now sure death was at hand. He moved round his shield between his shoulders. But the mace fell upon his shield more forcibly than a stone from a catapult. Furiously it rattled on the Persian chief, and hurled him off his saddle to the distance of three cubits, and broke his ribs and snapped his spine.

Now every warrior was filled with agitation at this surprising exploit, and the Persians when they saw it were bewildered. They rushed upon Antar, exposing themselves to certain death. For the Arabs rushed to meet them with shouts of victory, exhilarated by the great deeds of Antar. The two armies met, and the earth was pounded under the trampling of the horses. Clouds of dust thickened over their heads, and their fury increased till they were like the waves of the boisterous ocean.

But not for long could the leaderless Persians hold against the invincible Antar and his allies. The King

of Death circled round them. They were smitten and driven back. Before long their ranks broke and they fled away in terror towards their own country.

5

And now King Monzar could not do enough for Antar, his deliverer. He awarded to the hero alone all the plunder abandoned by the retreating Persians, and the captured horses and armor. And he said:

"If I knew your heart would be gratified by remaining with me, I would send a messenger to the Chieftain Zoheir and offer him my friendship. I would direct him to take Abla, your beloved, from her father and to send her here, whether Milik consented or not. Then should you be wed in my kingdom and our friendship should continue while life lasts. But I fear you would not allow me to do what your heart would not sanction."

"O great king," answered Antar, "I can not possibly remain here, for all your kindness. Every day appears a thousand years to me. But I swear by your munificence towards me that, even should my heart burst with the fierceness of my love and loneliness, I will not quit this country till I have seen this thing to the end."

Then King Monzar rejoiced, for he greatly feared Chosroe, and he knew that the emperor of the Persians would not receive the news of Khosrewan's death without anger, and that more would surely follow. Therefore he prepared his allies for war and waited. And Antar with him.

Great therefore was their astonishment when, instead of an invading army, a letter came from the court of Persia. The letter was written by Chosroe's grand vizier, and it said nothing whatever of punishment or battle, but only this:

"I have promised Chosroe, the Monarch of the World, that Antar shall overcome a certain Syrian warrior and chief, Badhramoot by name, and shall relieve the emperor's heart from its present distress and affliction. Come therefore without delay, and let there be no other answer to this letter but placing your foot in the stirrup."

Chapter 7

NOW in this case, as in others, fortune had favored Antar, and thus it came about.

Chosroe of Persia had at that time certain kingdoms which, though not vassals, yet paid him yearly tribute in jewels, gold, slaves and goods, in order that he might leave them in peace. Among them was Syria. Now it chanced that scarcely had Khosrewan departed on his expedition against Monzar than the tribute from Syria arrived at the court of Chosroe. But this year, accompanying the tribute, came a gigantic warrior by the name of Badhramoot.

This Badhramoot was a chieftain in his own country and a gallant man who smarted under the dominion of Persia, but more because of his religion than because of the worldly tribute, for he was not of the

religion of the fire-worshippers and he thought shame that tribute should be paid them. Therefore, when the moment came to send tribute, he asked permission of the king of his country to accompany the tribute, and it was granted him.

When he arrived before Chosroe he therefore addressed him as follows:

"O most glorious Emperor, you know that kings will not submit to pay tribute until they have been vanquished in battle. I am now come with all this property as presents to you, but I wish to avert this disgrace from my faith, and I offer to engage your warriors in your presence. If they slay me in the combat, my blood is rightfully yours. But if I am superior to your heroes, then relieve us from tribute, and do not expose mankind to difficulties and hardships, for in all religions it is tyranny to oppress the weak."

All this having been interpreted to Chosroe, his anger was considerably excited. Yet, on second thoughts—for Chosroe was a man who loved justice—the mildness of the Syrian's representations calmed him. He pondered the subject some time and at last was convinced that he had made only a reasonable demand.

He therefore gave commands that the bravest of his warriors should meet this Badhramoot in single

combat. This was accordingly done. But the huge Syrian proved so invincible that one by one Chosroe's best men were slain by him. This continued for fifteen days, till Chosroe was in despair and deeply regretted his consent. Yet he would not retreat from it.

At this juncture he one day turned to his vizier and said, "When will Khosrewan return, for on him alone our hopes now rest?"

Now the vizier was a wise man and a crafty. He had already heard that Khosrewan was slain, and the manner of it, yet he had withheld the news from Chosroe who was all anxiety over the new trouble. Now, however, the vizier deemed it necessary to tell Chosroe, but at the same time he urged upon the emperor that Antar, who could vanquish Khosrewan, could also vanquish Badhramoot.

"Send, therefore, for this Arab," he advised, "and leave the question of Monzar till later." To this Chosroe agreed; and thus the letter was sent.

Upon receipt of it King Monzar, with Antar and a hundred warriors, set out at once for the Persian court. When they arrived they found Chosroe in the deepest dejection, and feeling keenly the shame that had come upon his warriors. When they had been ushered into the presence of the emperor, they made their respects, and Antar addressed Chosroe in these words:

"May God avert from you the evils of fortune, and may you live secure from calamities! May your star be ever brilliant in progressive prosperity, and increase in glory! May your renown be ever celebrated in every land, for you are just and beneficent. So may you ever live a Sovereign in glory, as long as the dove pours forth its plaintive note."

Chosroe was amazed at Antar's eloquence, and dumbfounded at the height of his person, his prodigious strength and the fire of his eyes. Then the vizier said:

"O king, this is he who has slain your satrap Khosrewan and destroyed his army of twenty thousand men. Let him now take away the life from this Badhramoot, and remove grief and sorrow from your heart."

"Should this be the case," answered Chosroe, "we will pardon his fault, and ennoble him with gifts. Treat him with all kindness and hospitality." And to King Monzar he said, "O King of the Arabs, the error was mine at first, and his who raised this rebellion among you. But the fire of death has destroyed him in your presence." Whereat Monzar rejoiced exceedingly.

Chosroe expected Antar to rest till the next day, but the hero would not hear of it. "By the holy Kaaba," he exclaimed, "I will not eat meat with you,

nor drink wine, till I have slain this Syrian and made him drink the cup of death. For he has moved the heart of the just king."

Therefore Antar prepared his arms and his cuirass and sprang from the ground to the back of his horse. The place of trial was prepared for them and the combat commenced.

Now the tale of this battle is long and furious, but it need not be told here. Badhramoot, in spite of his great prowess, proved to be no match for Antar the unconquerable. In the end the Syrian was overpowered and slain.

Then Chosroe, who had remained all day watching the combat, said to his attendants, "By the Essence of Fire, this is indeed horsemanship and courage! Never have I seen aught like this!" And he clothed Antar with an imperial robe, and presented him with five Arabian horses, with saddles of burnished gold studded with jewels. He also gave him all that had come from Syria, whether gold or beautiful maidens. And he sent the other Syrians who had come with Badhramoot back to their own country.

Then he ordered that Antar be brought before him on the morrow, in order that he might be properly rewarded and made a viceroy.

Thus the star of Antar continued in the ascendant.

2

Now when they had quitted the presence of Chosroe the vizier took charge of Antar and King Monzar, and saw to their entertainment.

But first he took Antar where the treasure lay which the emperor had given him. He opened all the boxes and presented to the hero all the pearls and jewels and precious stones, the silks and rare wines. And Antar smiled, as he exclaimed, "O what joy! Where are your eyes, O Abla? By the faith of an Arab, there is not in all these treasures one atom of you, no, not one grain!" And he praised the vizier also, and thanked him.

Then the vizier said: "We do not mean that you should be content with this small gift, which is only what the Syrian brought with him. You shall soon behold our munificence. For Chosroe's heart is set on rewarding you."

Then he ordered food set before them. When it came Antar observed the variety of delicious meats, of mutton and pigeons and thrushes, and the quantity of doves, and the profusion of sweetmeats. He turned to Monzar and asked:

"Are these various viands the usual food here? Are they at all times accustomed to such luscious things, for I see no camel's flesh?"

"What are you talking of?" cried Monzar. "Think no more of the wilds and deserts and those that drink camel's milk night and day. Accustom yourself to luxury, for you must live now in the vicinity of great kings."

So Antar ate till he was satisfied. And as he ate, the beautiful slave girls, Greek and Circassian, with skins white as milk and long hair yellow as corn, came to him, for they had been told that they were now his property. Whenever he sat down or rose up they surrounded him and offered their services. But Antar took not the slightest notice of them.

"O Antar," said King Monzar, "remove from your heart all painful memories or thoughts of your own country, and enjoy yourself. For were the chieftains of your own country to see you now, how they would envy you!"

But Antar replied, "Love of my native land is the fixed passion of my soul, and the thought of Abla beats in me like my own heart. I have no other desire but speedily to return to my own country that I may see my friends and companions, and may show them the Asafir camels which shall be Abla's dower."

Now the next day Chosroe sent for Antar as he had promised. The hero found the emperor seated in a summer garden so beautiful that Antar's heart

was confused by it. It was a superb palace, like a fairy pavilion, sixty cubits in length and fifty cubits wide, built of marble and red carnelian. In the centre was a fountain filled with rose water and purest musk. In the middle of it was a column of emerald, and on its summit a hawk of burnished gold; its eyes were topaz and its beak jasper; round it were various birds, scattering upon Chosroe and all that were present musk and ambergris. The whole edifice was scented with perfumes, and the ceiling of the pavilion glittered with gold and silver.

At the upper end of the pavilion sat Chosroe on a burnished throne of gold, with pillars of green emerald and pedestals of silver, so that it shone dazzlingly. Round it were stools of ivory and ebony inlaid with gold. The whole court was in attendance. Antar and Monzar advanced and Antar would have kissed Chosroe's feet. But the Emperor raised him up and kissed him between the eyes, an honor he had never given to any one. Then he seated them beside him, thus raising them above all present.

No sooner were they all seated than tables were brought, loaded with foods so various and viands so luxurious that Antar fell into confusion. The others ate as they were accustomed but Antar, the son of the wild desert, sat down upon his knees, bared his arms, and chucked things into his mouth without a pause.

He gorged himself like the hungry Arab he was, and roared like a wild beast with pleasure, to the amazement of Chosroe, who supplied him with every variety that was before them. And Antar devoured them all, asking Chosroe the name of each as he did so. When he had finished he praised Chosroe's munificence in song.

Then wine was brought round that was like fire, and like the rosy cheeks of a maiden. The liquor played with his wits and refreshed all the pleasures he had enjoyed. Antar looked upon this jovial feast as a dream, for his heart and soul were at home and all his desires centred upon Abla. After a time Chosroe asked him questions and laughed and joked with him, asking him about his home and his life. And Antar told him all. Then said Chosroe:

"I am truly surprised, O Absian, at your forebearance and your reserve, your grievances against your uncle being of such a nature."

"O my lord," answered Antar, "I swear by your munificence which is unbounded, and by the liberality of your hands which can never be forgotten, that I am a dead man among the living!"

Monzar, who had overheard, was annoyed. "Hush!" he said to Antar. "Abandon the expressions of ignorant Arabs and remember that you are in a place where decorum and civility are expected.

Fill your glass and listen to the voice of the singing girl who would soothe the afflicted."

But Antar heeded him not. Instead he raised his voice in a poem that woke in him.

"O Abla!" he began,

"Wine cannot calm my heart, sickness will not quit my body.
My eyes are ever torrents of tears. I would say to my friend that this is all a dream.
In the land of Hejaz are the tents of my tribe, and I may not see them again.

There dwells a plump-hipped damsel who never removes her veil.
And under her veil are eyes whose beauty strikes me with madness.
Between her lips is the purest musk, and camphor diluted with wine.
My love and madness are dear to me, for to him who loves, sweet is the pang of love.

Yet in my journey pleasure has succeeded to troubles that would turn a babe gray in its cradle.
I have met a king to whom all creation is a slave, and to whom fortune is a vassal.

Whose hands distribute bounties, so that I know not whether it is the sea or a cloud.

The stars are his jewels, in which is a moon brilliant and luminous, as at its full.

Live forever, O prince of the world, long as the birds shall sing and the heavens revolve. Live forever!"

Chosroe, who was himself eloquent in the Arabian language, was greatly delighted at these words like jewels that fell from the lips of his uncouth guest.

"O Absian," he said, "anything that I can give you would be a small gift in comparison with your deserts, for what I can give is transitory. But the beauty and glory of your poems will endure for ages. Nevertheless ask what you desire, that I may make you some compensation for your praises."

"Indeed," said Antar, "I have fallen by your bounty into a sea that has neither length nor breadth, and I shall return to my country raised to glory among them. Yet truly I wish that my uncle's daughter Abla had on her head a coronet like this you wear, for it would set her off to perfection—though I know it is very ill-bred of me to make such a request."

The company were all aghast at this, but Chosroe

laughed and spoke to one of his satraps, who went forth and presently returned. With him were twelve slaves who bore a litter of silver; and on its top was a hawk of burnished gold, its eyes topaz and its feet emerald. Then Chosroe took off the coronet from his head and laid it in the litter.

"These," said he, "do I send to your lovely rose of the desert! This canopy shall serve her to sit in on the night she is wedded to you, and in this coronet shall she become your bride."

Antar kissed the emperor's hands and said:

"O King of the Universe, I thank you for the gifts you have bestowed upon me! You are the most munificent of all that tread the earth! But your slave still lives in the agony he endures from his love, his weakness and his passion. He lives far from his friends for whom he thirsts and, languishing for Abla, he lives restless and in torment."

The emperor's astonishment increased. "O Absian, what more do you want?" he asked.

"I request of you," said Antar, "the renewal of the appointment of King Monzar."

"It shall be done," said Chosroe, and he directed it to be written and made known throughout his domains, that Monzar should not be removed from his government, and had he even a blind daughter, she should follow him as ruler thereof.

"Have you any other want?" he said, delivering the letter to Antar.

"I have no other wish," answered the hero, "but to return to my country and home."

3

Chosroe would fain have kept Antar with him a little longer, since in the luxurious pleasure-loving court of Persia he had never yet seen so strange a mixture of strength, fiery eloquence, rustic simplicity and unquenchable love, and it entertained him. But, seeing how deep was Antar's desire to return to his own tribe, he gave consent. The day of departure was set for three days hence.

But before the day arrived one more adventure was to come to the hero.

Chosroe had among his attendants a gigantic wrestler named Rostam whose envy was excited by the great honor paid to Antar. When he heard that the Absian had been given Chosroe's own coronet his rage knew no bounds. He rushed into the emperor's presence without being summoned, as Chosroe sat the next day in his summer-garden with Antar, and kissing the ground, demanded that he be permitted to wrestle with the son of the desert.

Chosroe received him kindly enough and tried to

dissuade him from his jealous rage. But Rostam would not be quieted. Then Chosroe was vexed, and turned to Antar.

"Do you understand what he is saying?" he asked.

"No, my lord," answered Antar, who knew no Persian, "but I perceive that he is very jealous and that his head is like the head of a camel. Tell me what he wants that I may comply with his request."

"The man is my wrestler," said Chosroe, "and he is come to try his strength with you in wrestling."

"I fear him not," answered Antar, "but he is your man and I am your guest. Let it not be said of me that I accepted your bounty and slew your subject in your presence."

"If you wrestle with him will you slay him?" asked Chosroe much agitated.

"Yes," said Antar, "for he only seeks to wrestle with me that he may destroy me. You know, O king, that wrestling is one species of warfare, and justice and propriety are required in it. If one antagonist prevails over the other he abuses and reviles him; but should his antagonist be angry at him, he kills him."

Chosroe again attempted to dissuade Rostam but, finding him resolved, at last he gave permission for the combat, telling Rostam sharply that if he failed his death would be his own doing. And he absolved Antar from blame.

Rostam then clothed himself in the short breeches used for wrestling, but Antar to every one's surprise merely tucked his cloak into his waistband. He who had served his apprenticeship wrestling with she camels in the desert found the formalities quite unnecessary.

Antar went up to Rostam. Rostam bent himself like an arch and glowed with rage like a burning flame. He rushed upon the hero with all his force. They grasped each other with their hands, they butted with their heads, they assaulted with their whole might, like two elephants. Then Rostam stretched out his hand to Antar's waist-band and clung to it, and attempted to lift him up in his arms. But he found him like a stone fixed in a tower. Instead of raising Antar, Rostam himself tottered as he stood.

Then he repented of what he had done, and of having provoked Antar. He would gladly have withdrawn from the contest, but could not. He slackened his hold and ceased to attack, but spent an hour in avoiding an issue, running round Antar, dodging and evading. And Antar, who had kept his temper and did not wish to kill him, pressed him not.

But finally, growing desperate, Rostam ran round behind his antagonist and thrust his head between Antar's legs, attempting to raise him on the back of his neck and dash him on the ground. But Antar

knew his intentions. So he closed his knees on Rostam's neck, and almost made his eye-balls start from their sockets. Rostam was terrified and wished to escape from between his legs, but could not. Then Antar seized Rostam by the breeches and raised him up in his hands as though he were a child.

Now in the time they had been wrestling the antagonists had drawn away from before Chosroe, who still sat on his throne, and the courtiers had pressed in between, so that Chosroe could no longer see what was occurring. Noticing this, Antar, carrying Rostam before him in the air, moved through the press of courtiers, who fell back before him towards the emperor, intending to renew the contest before him. Rostam, when he saw that his life was in Antar's hands, was abashed and mortified before all the courtiers, the satraps and the emperor. He clenched his fist and struck Antar on the ear, a foul blow not permitted by the rules.

Antar soon recovered from the blow, but a cold rage had risen in him. Coolly he carried Rostam out to the threshold of the pavilion and dashed him to the ground with such force that all his bones were shattered and he died on the instant.

Then he presented himself again before Chosroe.

The emperor, who had seen the foul blow, was more than ever impressed with the strength of the hero,

and ordered all of Rostam's property, which was considerable, to be given to Antar. "For," said he, "Rostam brought about his own destruction."

He also ordered his vizier to conduct Antar to the royal treasury and there to give him whatever he desired. Antar chose, from among the innumerable treasures there, a great tent or pavilion, the largest he had even seen, and of beautiful workmanship. To this the vizier added a great number of other things, so that he who had once been a penniless slave was now rich beyond his farthest dreams.

4

At last the day came on which the hero was to depart. Chosroe himself, with a number of his courtiers, accompanied Antar on the first lap of his journey, until they came to the edge of the desert. There the poet of the wilds made a last poem in praise of Chosroe, praising again his munificence and comparing him to the bright star Sirius—for the stars have ever been dear to those who dwell in the open spaces, and even in those days the Arabs knew their wheeling and their setting.

Chosroe thanked him with feeling, saying that Antar's praises were worth more than the worldly riches he had received. Then he kissed him a last time be-

tween the eyes and, after praying that Antar would visit him often, he turned back.

But Antar and King Monzar, accompanied by a great concourse of slaves and beasts of burden who bore the numberless riches the Absian had received, rode onward till they came to Monzar's domains. The day of their arrival was a great festival, and the Arabs were filled with astonishment at the display of wealth. Monzar made a great entertainment in his honor and Antar tarried for three days. But on the fourth he set out once more for the Land of Shurebah and the tents of the Tribe of Abs.

With him went King Monzar's blessing, the thousand head of Asafir camels for Abla's dowry, loaded with wealth, and other rare gifts.

Thus Antar, the son of a slave woman, returned in triumph and richer than any chieftain of the desert far and wide.

Chapter 8

NOW this is what befell in the tents of the Tribe of Abs during the absence of Antar. When Shiboob arrived with the news of his death—for he thought he had seen him slain by the horsemen of King Monzar—grief fell upon the tribe like the black pall of night. His father Shaddad refused to be comforted, but sat in his tent mourning by night and day. The Chieftain Zoheir and Prince Malik beat their breasts for sorrow, and universal mourning filled the air.

As for Abla, she was like the stricken gazelle or the waning moon. She grew pale as death. She let the dark night of her hair hang loose and unkempt about her. At times she cried aloud and tore her face and her breast with her hands, as is the custom of mourning among the Arabs to this day. At times

she sat for days together in a strange lethargy, refusing food, gazing only at her own pale hands which Antar had kissed.

Now at the moment when Shiboob arrived, her father Milik, with Amru her brother and some horsemen of the family, were absent from the camp. For as time had passed without news of Antar the tribe looked askance at Milik who had sent the hero on the dangerous mission in search of the Asafir camels. Therefore Milik thought it prudent to absent himself. It was ten days after the news had arrived that he returned one evening at nightfall.

As he approached his tents he saw in the silver moonlight a strange sight. A newly-made grave was before them and beside it sat a woman covered with her hair and clothed in the garb of mourning. Tears flowed in torrents down her cheeks and she was tearing the flesh of her wrists with her teeth, and thus lamenting:

"O grave, so long as the west wind blows, shall my tears stream and moisten your sands!
Let the beauteous stars fall at the death of Antar, my cousin and my belovèd.

Gone is he who was the protector of the tribe and my heart's core!

Gone by treachery to his death!
Yet, O grave, his sepulchre is not in you, but in my heart.
There shall he dwell till I go to join him in the burning sands!"

Now the grave was but a memorial to Antar, since they knew not where his body lay; for this was an ancient custom. When Milik saw it he thought that his hopes had been realized and that Antar was indeed dead. He put on all his hypocrisy and, circling around Abla unseen, he went in to his wife.

"What misfortune is this?" he asked her, "and for whom is all this weeping and lamentation?"

"For your nephew Antar," she answered. "Accounts of his death arrived during your absence, and there is not an individual in the whole tribe but abuses you."

Milik pretended grief before her and then went out to Abla, as she sat weeping, and kissed her hair and said:

"My child, let not this sad affair prey on your mind, but moderate your grief and distress, for indeed I but sent Antar for the camels that you might be glorified above all others."

But Abla sprang up from the grave and started back from him, her eyes blazing now with fury.

"Away from me!" she cried. "No one slew my cousin but you! You exposed him to the ocean of perils. Truly a curse will come upon you and you will soon share the evils you brought upon him!" Then she fled from him into the tent.

Milik did not pursue her but repaired to the tent of his brother Shaddad. But here he fared no better, for as he approached he heard Shaddad's voice also raised in lamentation mixed with curses, and among the curses was his own name.

Nevertheless Milik entered. He tore off his garments and burst into sighs and tears.

"Indeed, my brother," he said, "we also require your prayers." And he attempted to kiss Shaddad. But Shaddad turned away from him and exclaimed:

"Away with this deceit and hypocrisy! Who but you sent my son to his death? But there are those who will demand his blood at your hands and will requite you for his death!"

Then Milik slunk away, hot coals burning in his heart as he sought a way to cover his guilt. He knew now the temper of the tribe towards him, and took counsel with himself. And it seemed to him that only by emigrating from the tents of Abs could he weather the storm.

Therefore he roused his slaves and his warriors and gave orders that his tents should be struck and all

made ready for departure before daylight. And it was done. Abla, still lamenting, was carried out and placed in a litter. His wife also and all the female slaves. The men, with Milik and Amru at their head, mounted, and the loaded beasts were driven after them. So they stole away while yet it was dark.

2

But it chanced that one of the slaves of Amarah, the dandy whose heart also was set on Abla, saw the preparations and hastened with the news to his master, for he knew that, now Antar was dead, Amarah counted on obtaining Abla for himself.

Amarah was terrified, and roused his brother Rebia, saying:

"Milik is stealing her away from me, and even yet I shall be cheated of my desire! Let us therefore mount and go after them!" Rebia agreed, and with a few horsemen they also mounted and went after Milik into the desert.

When they had come up with him, Milik told them of his plan to emigrate till the storm of feeling over Antar's death should have subsided. And Amarah said:

"We also will come with you, for we like no more than you do all this wailing for a swarthy, swagger-

ing slave! I will win for you Abla's dower by marauding, and you shall give her to me far from the tents of Abs. When time enough has passed we will return to the tribe. So shall all be well at last!" Milik was delighted at this unexpected assistance and Rebia, being urged, agreed also.

So they went forth together, and traveled till they had passed the confines of their own country. Here they fell in with a tribe of few tents who were glad of the protection of the thirty or so horsemen who made up the party. And here they dwelt for some time.

Amarah with Rebia made a marauding expedition as he had promised and brought back plunder to serve as a dower till they could return to Abs, when

he promised more. And he pressed his cause with Abla.

But Abla would have none of him. She declared that her heart was buried in the grave with Antar and that she would have none other, though he should come with a thousand charms. And so violent was she in her denial that neither Milik nor her mother could control her. Therefore they counseled patience and Amarah, his heart growing more determined with every day that passed, waited perforce.

Abla was indeed like the waning moon. She grew paler and more listless day by day, save when they spoke to her of Amarah, when she would spring up like the savage lioness. Then her beautiful eyes, which had grown larger till they seemed to fill her whole face, would flash fire, and she would storm till she fell back exhausted. Yet her pallor only served to enhance her loveliness and to give it an almost unearthly charm.

So matters continued till weeks had passed.

Then one day a dire calamity befell the little settlement.

Now there was in those days a gigantic negro slave, born in some corner of the country of Yemen, who had become a pirate of the desert. He was known as the Nocturnal Evil. With a band of others like himself he haunted the wastes and the great stretches of

the desert, attacking parties who might pass, or small encampments. He only stayed three days in one place, during which time he overwhelmed it in blood and massacre.

But his specialty was women. The maiden whom he captured he kept three days for himself, taking his will of her. After that he gave her to his men, who killed her, roasted her and devoured the corpse, for they were cannibals.

It was this man who with his horde one day bore down upon the tents of Milik. And when he saw that there were women among the party he cried out:

"O what a glorious morning! I am the Nocturnal Evil, the Depredator of the Age!"

Then he and his men bore down upon the encampment, taking it by surprise and killing many. Terror fell upon Milik and all with him when they knew by whom they were attacked, for the man was known far and wide. Men armed themselves hastily. Slaves ran hither and thither screaming, and the cries of the dying rose to heaven. Milik, Rebia and Amru armed themselves and stood before the tents of the women, hoping to keep off the invaders. But Amarah dallied in his tent.

The Nocturnal Evil and his horde came on. They overwhelmed and wounded Milik and Rebia, but did not slay them, for he saw that they were wealthy

men and it was his intention to hold them for ransom. As for Amru, he gave himself up willingly, crying:

"Take the women and the goods, but spare us!"

All this Abla heard and, rousing herself in her desperation, she appealed to Amarah, and said:

"Amarah, O Amarah, help me! There is no one left but you, for he who would have protected me from all evil lies in his grave. Give me this day a proof of your bravery of which you have often boasted. Let me see how you can fight these black slaves!"

At these words all the pride of an Arab sprang into the heart of Amarah, and he felt that he could accomplish miracles. Death itself held no terrors for him. So he tucked up his skirts, twirled his whiskers and folded up his hair under his turban. Then he rushed out to the fray crying: "This assault, O Abla, is for your bright eyes!"

But it availed nothing. In an instant he also was lying trussed on the ground.

Thus Abla fell a prisoner to the Nocturnal Evil.

3

When the turmoil had subsided and her captor had beheld the beauty of Abla, and had been told that she was the beloved of Antar, the far-famed, his delight knew no bounds. He ordered her at once to be set in

a howdah and conducted by five black slaves to the shores of a lake that lay at no great distance, a pretty place of verdure and sweet water, fitting for the three days he intended to spend with her. There, he said, he would join her presently.

And it was done.

Chapter 9

NOW Antar, returning in triumph from Persia with the great procession of his riches, was in the habit of sending a slave forward to each halting place to see if any one was concealed there. On this evening when the slave went forward to a little lake he saw the spot already occupied by five black slaves, of the color of pitch. And with them was a splendid howdah on the summit of which was a golden crescent.

Within was a woman, weeping and sobbing from a wounded heart, and exclaiming:

"Why has God permitted me to live on, now that the lion is gone, who was ever the protector of women? O Antar, where are you? Alas, that our love should come to this!"

Now Antar, who rode hard on the heels of the slave, came up in time to hear the last words. He hastened up to the slaves and cried out:

"Whose are these tents? Who intends to stop here? And who is this that is crying and weeping, and calling on the name of Antar?"

The slaves answered him insolently, telling him to be gone, or the Nocturnal Evil would make vulture's meat of him. Rage woke in Antar like a storm at these words, but before he could answer the curtains of the howdah parted and a maiden appeared. Lo, it was Abla!

She had thrown herself on the ground and was endeavoring to rise, but could not, so exhausted was she by suffering and grief.

Antar was dumbfounded with horror.

"What does this mean?" he cried. "Who is it that has forced you to this desert, and whose slaves are these with you?"

But before she could answer one of the slaves spoke up. "Touch her not! She belongs to our master the Depredator of the Age!"

Antar wheeled, and before the words were cold in the air the man was dead. The rest fled, screaming. But Antar, roaring like a lion, fell upon them and killed three of them with as many thrusts of his spear. The fifth ran away into the wilds.

Then Antar returned to his beloved, who was kneeling in a little heap, joy and unbelief struggling in her face. He raised her tenderly from the ground, and she felt the strength of his arms about her. They looked into each other's eyes, and it seemed to them both that the stars stopped in their course . . .

2

But after a little, when his senses had slowly returned to Antar, and he found that his beloved stood only because he held her, he would have laid her again in the litter, but she protested.

"Not there, oh, not there, my love," she said. "It is too full of horror for me." So Antar took out the cushions and laid them beside the water's edge. There he placed her, and knelt beside her. So, beneath the dawning stars, while a verdant meadow stretched around them and the birds made their sleepy sounds of evening, these two comforted one another and told all that had befallen them. And Abla, for joy and weakness, wept. And Antar wept with her.

Then Abla said: "O my cousin, by my life that is in your heart, take me away with you and return to the nation that has loaded you with favors! Leave my father and my brother to their fate. Let the Nocturnal Evil do with them as he pleases. Return no

more to the Tribe of Abs, for verily I do fear my father and his treachery."

Antar smiled then, hearing her expressions of love and constancy, and said:

"The time has passed when he can do aught against us. Dismiss from your mind everything that can pain you. For by the life of your eyes and the arch of your black eyebrows, I will subdue all the world for you! I will make you supreme over every one, be he high or low!" Then he asked most tenderly concerning her health. And Abla said, "It is nothing, beloved! Now that I have you alive again, that were dead, strength will return to me also."

When the rest of the caravan came up with them Antar gave orders that the most magnificent of the tents should be set up at once and Abla placed therein, and revived with food and wine. Then he kissed her tenderly on her two eyes, and taking with him a few men went forth to meet the Nocturnal Evil.

The combat was of short duration, for Antar was an avenging sword. Hardly had the two met when the huge negro fell, pierced through the heart, and all his men after him, save those who took refuge in flight.

Then Antar liberated his uncle Milik, Amru, Amarah, Rebia and the women. He spoke kindly to them and kissed his uncle, saying: "Rejoice at your

deliverance from death, but know that your late sufferings were only a just punishment for your conduct towards me." And Milik debased himself before him, and wept, and promised that from that day forth Abla was his handmaiden and the others his friends.

Then Antar conducted them to his tents and they were amazed at the vast wealth they saw, and supposed that some great king had halted there. But Antar smiled and told them the property was his. Then he ordered a feast prepared for them and treated them royally. They could only praise and honor him outwardly, but inwardly they were in torment, for a heart given to perfidy cannot be won by kindness. Amarah especially was in despair and wept the night through, for he knew that now his hope of winning Abla was lost to him forever.

The next day they tarried in that place, that Abla might recover her strength. Already she was stronger, and the color which had for so long been absent from her cheeks had begun to steal back. The lovers spent the day together. Antar kissed her between the eyes, and she threw herself into his arms, covering his face and his hands with kisses. He pointed out to her the great riches he had won, showed her the coronet Chosroe had sent to her, with the litter surmounted by its hawk of burnished gold, and the beautiful female slaves. And he said:

"Truly the great emperor has enriched me beyond my greatest dreams. Take them all. They are yours. And you shall rule me as you will, by day and night."

But Abla answered: "Verily, your safety is more acceptable to me than all these riches. No pleasure have I felt but in your presence!" And Antar's heart was full.

3

The next day Abla felt that she was well enough to be carried in her litter, and Antar ordered the slaves to prepare for departure and load the camels. Six hundred was the number of his men slaves, and six hundred the women, and innumerable the camels and the treasures. The thousand Asafir camels, loaded with the wealth of King Monzar, he gave to Milik. To Abla he presented then the female slaves, the jewels, the magnificent robes studded with precious metals. He placed these robes upon her, and on her head he set Chosroe's coronet. Then he ordered forth for her the magnificent silver litter, which required six camels to carry it, and himself lifted her into it.

Abla was all but overcome by all this magnificence. It seemed to her that she could hardly endure so much joy after so much suffering. Her face shone with a radiance like the sun, and she smiled like the soft breeze from the sea. From her eyes shot glances that

were arrows of delight. Never had she been so beautiful.

At sight of her Amarah felt that he was dying. Milik wallowed in surprise and consternation. And as for Abla's mother, her tongue was tied up in her mouth, so vast was her astonishment.

So the caravan set forth towards home.

For days they traveled, Antar constantly at the side of his beloved, till they came within one day's journey of the tents of Abs. On this morning it was noticed that Amarah and Rebia were not to be found.

"I imagine," said Milik, "that they have gone on before to announce your arrival to the tribe."

"No, no," said Antar, "they do not love me well enough to do this courtesy for me."

"Well," answered Milik, "I will go forward myself, that the way may be properly prepared and the warriors may come forth to meet you." Antar thanked him, and Milik then changed his mount and rode forward with all speed.

When his uncle had gone Antar tarried a while, talking with Abla, the most beautiful of human beings, and feasting his eyes with the sight of her. The whole earth seemed to him too small for the expansion of his love and joy.

At last he said: "Your father has gone ahead to prepare the way, and surely the Chieftain Zoheir and the

warriors of the tribe will come to meet us. I wish also to precede you, and to meet them nearer home. For in our own country I feel secure about you against all the treacheries of fortune." Then he kissed her, and ordered the slaves to guard her with their lives, and to keep her a little apart from the caravan, because of the great dust it raised.

So he rode forward. And it fell out as he had predicted. For early in the afternoon a second cloud of dust arose, and it resolved itself into all the horsemen of Abs. At their head was the Chieftain, like a lion starting from its den. Over his head waved the eagle banner, and at his side rode Prince Malik and Shaddad.

The meeting was a tumult of delight. Antar descended from his horse and kissed the Chieftain's hands. Shaddad and Prince Malik were beside themselves with joy, and a universal shout of triumph went up. Every one must kiss the hero, every one must be spoken to. Antar's mother and his brothers, who had come also, wept and sobbed and clamored at the ecstasy of meeting. It was a day of days.

When Antar's caravan had come up the amazement increased. In the rear came Abla's silver litter with its golden hawk. Before her marched the imperial steeds and the slave girls like the moons of Paradise. Antar dismounted from Abjer and girt

about his loins a belt of gold brocade of priceless value. He ordered the slaves to lead aside some camels and mules laden with riches and also ten coursers of unrivaled beauty, with slaves and jewels. These he presented to the Chieftain and begged him to accept them. The Chieftain received them, and before each chest stood a lovely slave girl. Then Antar lavished riches on his father Shaddad. To all the horsemen also he distributed robes and money, slaves and youths, so that there was not one but partook of Antar's bounty.

"By the truth of the Kaaba!" exclaimed the Chieftain, "Antar must have completely impoverished the emperor of Persia!" And he commanded all the Absians to whom Antar had given largess to make him a suitable return. Later they returned to the camp.

Then at last Antar went to the litter of his beloved that he might lead her forth to her father's tents. He made the camels that bore her kneel down. He drew aside the curtains of cloth of gold, and he called her by her name.

But no answer came. *Abla was not in the litter.*

Chapter 10

A GREAT darkness fell upon Antar then, and his heart gave a leap that shook him as he stood, and then stopped in his breast. It seemed to him that an eternity had passed before it began to beat again, slowly and painfully.

When he had recovered himself somewhat he called the slaves to him with a roar that echoed on Mount Saadi. They ran to him trembling, so filled with terror that they could not speak. And Antar demanded what they had done with Abla.

The slaves were appalled at the disaster which had overtaken them, and could do nothing but stammer out that they too had thought Abla within the litter. At last a young man more quick-witted than the others cried out:

"It must have happened when the bird flew without wings!"

"Yes," caught up the others, "it must have been then."

Antar demanded to know what they meant by this, and the young man told him.

"O my lord," he cried, "do not kill us in your anger! It happened thus. As we were going about midday, after you had committed the damsel to our care, the caravan passed through a rocky defile.

"As you had told us to keep her out of the dust we rode at a little distance in the rear of the others. When we were in the rocky defile the last of the camels therefore passed beyond our sight, so that we were left alone. Yet we suspected nothing, being so close to the tents of Abs.

"But as we rode, suddenly from a height to our left a large bird flew overhead, uttering most desolate and wailing cries. And when we looked, behold! the bird had no wings.

"It passed overhead, and backward along the way we had come, still crying. And this was so strange a thing that, when we saw that at some distance it fell to the ground, we all ran back to see what could have caused it. I reached the bird first and found that its wings had been plucked off and it had been spitted on an arrow, as meat is spitted for roasting, the head of

the arrow being in the head of the bird. But how it could have uttered the cries, being dead, or what was the meaning of it, we could not tell. We searched a while among the rocks but found nothing and no one. Then we returned to the litter, which stood where we had left it, and hurried after the others. But by the truth of the Kaaba, we knew not that anything had happened to the damsel."

Then Antar knew that some malignity was here, and his grief added anger to its fuel. He ordered the slaves to be flogged for having deserted their charge. Then he rushed into the presence of the Chieftain, who had already gone to his tent, and told him all that had occurred. Zoheir sprang to his feet in dismay.

"Be comforted, O Antar my cousin!" he cried. "Let it be my business to clear up this mystery!"

"I am alone to blame," cried the hero, "for I left her with those who knew not her worth. I came too quickly to meet you. I have lost that without which all wealth and honor is but an empty cup."

"Nay," said Zoheir. "All the tribe is in your debt. We will scour the country and the hills, and we will find her."

Then he gave orders that all the horsemen should mount and spread out over the countryside in search of Abla. And it was done. All that night and the

next day, and another day thereafter, they searched far and wide. But they found nothing.

Antar meanwhile had sent for his brother Shiboob, the man who knew all the ways of the desert, and whose craft and courage were undaunted.

"O my brother!" Antar cried to him, and tears flowed from his eyes, "in you alone do I trust. Go out and find for me my beloved, who is my life and the beating of my heart." And Shiboob answered:

"If she be among the living, I will find her!" Then he made his preparations and departed at once.

2

Antar's grief was terrible to behold. He whom no terror and no fear of death could lay low, was struck down by this calamity as a tree is laid low by the ax of the woodman. He would not go forth from his tent, but passed the days and nights in weeping and storming. Sometimes he started up and put on his armor, thinking to go forth and search for her himself through the wilds. But he knew himself no master of cunning, as Shiboob was, and he feared that in his absence his brother might return with news. So he put off his armor again and fell anew to weeping.

In his sorrow his heart overflowed in song. *"O Abla!"* he cried,

"My tears stand in drops on my eyelids, and sleep is gone from my heart.
Wealth is mine beyond my fairest dreams, and honor which my deeds have won me.
I am exalted above all men.
Yet it avails me nothing, since you are gone.

We met—but our meeting quenched not the flame of my love.
No, it did not cool the boiling heat!
How shall I mourn for the mate who grieves for me?

Tears and lamentations are my only solace, yet this helps me not.
I am dying the slow death of anxiety."

He refused all food, save when the Chieftain came himself to his tent and besought him not to lose his strength, that he might not fail when the time came for rescue or revenge. He grew lean as a trotting camel that has run long days in the desert.

But his enemies rejoiced and were glad of his torment.

So the long days stretched into weeks, and still no word came from Shiboob.

Chapter 11

NOW this is what befell Abla the Beloved, and great were her sufferings. Fortunate indeed was she among women in her beauty and in the hero's love for her, yet these very marks of the favor of the Most High made her the cause of great striving among the Arabs, and caused her deep grief and lamentation. In this way the new calamity came about.

As Antar's triumphal march neared the tents of Abs, Amarah and his brother Rebia could not endure the thought of appearing at home in his train. So they turned aside into the desert and rode apart. And as they rode Amarah's heart was as wormwood within him. Abla, whom but so short a time before he had been sure of possessing, was now lost to him forever, and the thought of her beauty and her supple loveli-

ness as she sat in the litter rose so strongly in him that it choked him, and he felt that he was like to die. In his extremity he turned to Rebia and begged him to abduct her for him. And Rebia, who hated Antar with the implacable hatred of jealousy, agreed.

They therefore spurred their mounts, passing unobserved beyond the flank of the party till they came to rough country and a rocky defile. Here the crafty Rebia, who was a powerful man and skillful with the bow, shot a bird, plucked off its wings and spitted it upon an arrow as the slaves had told. Then he concealed himself on a height and waited till the litter passed below him, when he shot bird and arrow to-

gether, uttering at the same time the desolate cries which the simple slaves thought came from the bird.

Now it chanced that Abla, when she noticed that all the slaves had run back to see the strange thing that had befallen, had lighted down from the litter, glad to stretch her legs a while after the swaying of the howdah. Therefore, when Amarah rushed out upon her, he had but small difficulty in snatching her up, placing her behind him, and bearing her off into the desert.

Here Amarah demanded of her what man demands of woman. But she met him with bitter and furious denunciation, and threatened him with Antar's vengeance. When he would have taken her by force she defended herself with so much desperation, and such barbed jibes, that Amarah, always a weakling and a dandy, felt his desire turn to hatred. He lifted up his voice and lamented:

"Would to God that the Nocturnal Evil had killed you! Then at least my heart might learn peace."

Now when Rebia, who had been waiting at no great distance, heard these words he came to his brother and said:

"Since you feel so, my brother, let us kill her even now and bury her in the sand-hills. So shall we be revenged on this swarthy beast Antar."

But Amarah, for all he cried out as he did, when it came to the point could not bear to do such a deed or to countenance his brother's doing it while he stood by. Therefore Rebia temporized and said:

"Let us then send her across the desert to the tents of my old friend Mooferridj of the Tribe of Shiban. There she will be safe, and we can deal with her later as you wish. For indeed I fear that if we do not return to camp soon, when her absence is discovered we shall be suspected."

To this Amarah consented. Therefore they dispatched Abla, in the keeping of the slaves who had ridden forth with them, under the command of a trusty horseman, to the tents of Mooferridj. "Tell him," said Rebia, "that she is an adulteress whose lord wishes to be rid of her." And the slaves were ordered not to return but to remain also in that country. Then Rebia and Amarah spurred their mounts and, because lone warriors move faster than a great concourse, they arrived at the camp before Antar and met him there with welcome on their lips. So no suspicion fell on them.

Time passed, and no news came of Abla. Shiboob had been gone more than a moon in search of her, and Antar's grief waxed with each day that passed.

Now Rebia was uneasy in his mind. He formed a thousand conjectures and he said within himself: "If

any news of her should come to light, that beast Antar will go in search of her and surely rescue her. Then great evil will fall upon me through the Chieftain Zoheir. I must certainly go after her myself and bring about her death."

So he set forth with a few of his men, giving notice that he had gone on a marauding expedition, and repaired to the tents of his friend Mooferridj. But he did not tell Amarah of his design.

Arrived at the Tribe of Shiban, he sought his friend.

"O chief," said he, "what have you done with the maiden whom I sent you by my slaves?"

"She is here," replied Mooferridj, "in one of my tents. But she is nearly dead."

"And the pearls and jewels and clothes which she wore?"

"I have seen nothing of them," said Mooferridj. "But, O Rebia, who is this damsel?"

"She is Abla," he replied, "the daughter of Milik, and Antar's betrothed wife." And he related everything that had occurred.

But Mooferridj shuddered as he listened. "O Rebia," said he, "I have been your friend for years and years. How could you have the heart to smite me because of your envy? By the faith of an Arab, had I known she was the betrothed of Antar, never would I have admitted her to my tent, nor treated her as I

have, even had she been mistress of my life and death. Take her away, Rebia! Get me clear of this business, and bring not upon me trouble and vexation from Antar!"

Then Rebia sent for the trusty horseman with whom he had sent Abla to the tents of the Tribe of Shiban. And he inquired for the jewels.

"O my master," answered the man, "they are all here. I have kept them that I might deliver them to you in person." So he produced them all.

But when Mooferridj saw the great value of the pearls, and the jeweled coronet which Chosroe had given Antar, he trembled more and more. "What do you intend to do, O Rebia, with this property?" he asked.

"Do you," answered Rebia, "take half, and I will take half. Let us murder the girl, and there will be an end of it!"

"Agreed!" said Mooferridj.

Then he called to him a slave named Basharah, whom he had brought up, and he imparted to him the secret.

"O Basharah," said he, "take away this damsel, carry her out into the desert and murder her. Bury her in the sand-hills, and should any one question you about her, say her family came and took her away."

And he gave the slave a poniard with which to do the deed.

So when night had fallen Basharah mounted his horse and speeded to the tent where Abla was kept prisoner. He placed her behind him and set forth into the desert. And as they were proceeding:

"Whither, O slave, are you carrying me through the night?" asked Abla.

"To drink the cup of death!" he replied, "for my master has commanded me to kill you."

On hearing this she wept and screamed aloud, and called on Antar through the silent moonlit wilderness. But no answer came.

The slave, however, turned aside from the beaten track, and descended into a deep and desolate valley. There he made her alight from the horse. He bound her hands. He drew out the poniard and was about to strike a speedy blow.

But suddenly, as he bent to do so, a man pounced upon him like a male ostrich and struck him with a dagger between the shoulders, so that he fell swimming in his blood.

"Fear not!" cried her rescuer, "I am your slave Shiboob!"

As soon as Abla recognized him all her fears vanished.

"And where is the lion warrior, your brother?" she demanded.

"With the Tribe of Abs," replied Shiboob, "suffering in your absence every agony and suspense."

Then Abla asked Shiboob how he had found her, and he answered:

"Antar sent me out to search for you. I inquired

of every one, both a-horse and a-foot, and I have been wandering about from tribe to tribe these fifty days, till the Lord of Life and Death sent me to you, just as I was despairing and had resolved to return home.

"Three days ago I heard that Rebia was in this quarter, going to visit his friend Mooferridj. Now I know of old that Rebia is an enemy of Antar. So I sped on ahead to see what I might see. I came into the camp yesterday, giving a false name, and I kept my ears open. And the Lord was with me, for in passing by the women's quarters in the night, when

all was quiet and every one asleep, I heard a woman's voice wailing and lamenting through the calmness of the night. And the voice said:

"'Oh, for the joys of Mount Saadi and the Land of Shurebah!

Here I am clothed in garments of raw leather, and made to do menial work, so that I weep when I rise up, and I weep when I lay me down.
My eyes are ulcered from weeping.
I am the bird of the tamarisk. All the livelong night, drooping, she mourns for her mate that is gone and returns not.

O Antar, where are you? The hero of Abs, their champion when the battle dust arises!
How often have you protected me with the edge of your sword, you the refuge of mothers, fearful of being bereft of their children!
Here I dwell, hoping for relief from my agonies at your hand.
To no other will I complain!'"

"Yes," said Abla, "thus I lamented always."

"So," went on Shiboob, "I waited and I watched. And to-night, when I saw this slave departing with you, I followed."

"And what will you do now?" asked Abla.

"First I will finish this fellow," said Shiboob, pointing to Basharah, "then I will take you away and go home with you."

But Abla's fears had returned. "Alas, I never expect to reach home unless Antar is with me, for the way is long and fraught with danger," she said. And she lifted up her voice and cried, "O Antar, where are you? And where is my dear Kehla, who has been wont to share all dangers with me? Were she even here my heart would be more at peace."

Now Kehla was a slave girl whom Antar had captured in a raid, and who had become Abla's dear companion. And Shiboob answered, "Kehla is nearly dead with excessive grief, and the tears she has shed for your misfortunes."

So saying, Shiboob ran towards the slave Basharah to finish him. He found him sitting on the ground, listening to all that passed, his wounds preventing him from speaking. But when he saw Shiboob rise to put an end to him, by a great effort he faltered out:

"O young man, by the faith of an Arab, spare me till I have put one question, for I may be able to help you."

"Ask what you please, and relieve your heart," answered Shiboob.

"Know," said Basharah, "that I am the lover of a

slave girl called Kehla. She was like the rising sun. We were brought up together under the favor of my master Mooferridj, and love for her took possession of my heart. She loved me in return, but the troubles of the times tore her away from me, and never have I heard her name mentioned but by you, O noble born. When her name was spoken life returned to me on her account. Now I ask that you tell me whether this maid has been with you a long time, or only lately?"

"This maiden," said Shiboob, "formed part of my brother Antar's plunder from the Tribe of Madraka, this year ago." And he gave so distinct a description of Kehla that Basharah's grief and anguish greatly increased.

"It is—it is my beloved!" he cried, and bowed his head.

But he raised it again quickly and said, "It is now near day, and I fear some unlucky accident. What do you intend to do with Abla? If you take her away and depart, the horsemen will pursue us and bring misery upon us and restore us to Rebia, so that we shall all be put to death.

"I have a better plan. Do you return to your brother Antar and acquaint him with what has happened. Let him act as in his wisdom he may think prudent, and come hither. In the meanwhile I will return with Abla. I will conceal her with my mother.

Then will I present myself to my master Mooferridj, and to Rebia, and tell them I have slain the Absian maiden, and that this is her blood streaming over my garments, this blood from my own wound. Then we will wait, patiently expecting your return with Antar."

"How can I depend on you?" asked Shiboob.

"Let this wound which you have given me be my security," said Basharah. "I forgive you for that, for you knew not the secret of my story."

Then Abla and Shiboob were convinced of his sincerity and took counsel together.

"Basharah is right," said Abla. "We cannot travel in safety over the desert without Antar. There are too many dangers!" And she shuddered, remembering the Nocturnal Evil. "Return therefore to my cousin and tell him to come with a party from the Tribe of Abs. Thus will my afflictions cease. Then we will go, and take Basharah with us, for since Kehla loves him—as indeed I know she does for she has often spoken of him—I shall also be his friend."

Shiboob approved the advice, and having made Basharah swear by the Great Creator that he would not deceive nor betray them, he set out.

But Basharah took away Abla and returned with her before the dawn came. He placed her in the best apartment. He cherished her on account of Kehla,

his beloved, and she was dearer to him than any of his family or tribe. He would with joy have enclosed her in his own existence. And his mother for his sake concealed the maiden.

Then Basharah went to his master Mooferridj and did as he had promised Shiboob. Rebia was exceedingly pleased and happy. He instantly rose up, and put on Basharah his own vest and turban, praising him for the deed.

Thus was death averted from Abla the Belovèd.

2

Now Shiboob traveled by night and day, and tarried not, till he reached the Tribe of Abs. He arrived by night and passed unseen into his brother's tent. And Antar would scarcely recognize him, so much altered was he by fatigue and grief, by want of sleep, by fear and thirst and hunger. At sight of him in this pitiful condition Antar's heart was nearly bursting. He embraced him and exclaimed:

"Thank God, my brother, that you at least are alive, for much I feared your death!"

And Shiboob answered, "Yea, I have scoured the country till I have become like a dry camel, or the male hedgehog. The desert seemed in flames, the rays blazed on the mountains, and sparks of fire burned

my eyes. But at last the good God rewarded me. I have found Abla!" And he related the whole story.

When Antar had heard it all so great a rage against Amarah and Rebia rose in him that he swooned away with the might of it. He fell like a tree that is laid low by a storm, and stretched his length on the floor of the tent. But Shiboob revived him, and when he had recovered he swore a great oath of vengeance against his enemies. He would have roused the camp at once and started instantly to the relief of his beloved.

But Shiboob restrained him. "News," said he, "travels with incredible speed on the desert. Therefore do not let it be known that we have found her, lest word reach there before we do, and they take her from Basharah and slay her after all. Do you rather let it be known that you have grown restless from waiting, that you fear not only for Abla but also for me, and that you are going in search of us. So shall we run no danger."

Antar saw the wisdom of this, and though he chafed yet he waited till morning. Then he did as Shiboob advised. He took with him a band of warriors and set out, and Shiboob, weary as he was, met them beyond the tents and went with them. The Chieftain and Prince Malik were delighted to see Antar thus rush

into action, for they had been sorely troubled by his terrible grief.

The party rode swiftly till they neared the tents of Mooferridj. Here Shiboob said:

"Let me again go forward in disguise and find Basharah. He shall bring Abla forth to us before we attack. So shall we not lose the kernel of this nut."

So he went as a slave, and by skillful questioning found the tent of Basharah without exciting suspicion. And by good fortune Basharah was within. They met like old friends and were overjoyed at finding one another.

Then Basharah, telling Shiboob to meet him at a little distance, repaired to the tent of Abla with the glad tidings that her troubles were at an end. He clothed her in the costume of a warrior of his tribe, let down the visor, mounted her as a horseman, and went forth openly with her. Shiboob joined them and they went together to meet the Absians.

Thus once again the lovers were reunited, and though in the presence of the warriors they might not give rein to their great happiness, yet Antar kissed his beloved between the eyes and they feasted their eyes with beholding each the other, and were comforted.

Then Abla presented Basharah to Antar, telling of

all his kindness to her. And Antar kissed him also and promised him that he should be married at once to his beloved Kehla.

After this Antar left the three to wait for him, and the Absians swooped down upon the tents of Mooferridj. Swift was the hero's vengeance. None could resist him, and he sought among the tents for Rebia, who still dwelt with the tribe.

Yet this great enemy was not to die by Antar's hand, for a young man, a cousin of Mooferridj, seeing the destruction wrought among his tribe by Rebia's treachery, struck him in his side with a spear, so that it pierced his heart and he fell dead. And afterwards Antar was glad of this because, while he would in his rage have killed him, yet Rebia was a chieftain of his own tribe and it was well that his blood was not upon the hero's hands, for that would have made dissension among the Tribe of Abs.

As for Mooferridj, Antar did not slay him, but allowed him to buy his life with the best of his property.

Then they returned to their own home, Antar riding by his beloved's side, and never for one moment quitting her.

Chapter 12

NOW at last, after the long and weary years of waiting, the lovers had come into a haven of peace.

Milik, Abla's father, though he still hated Antar, yet could no longer find an excuse for refusing his daughter's hand. Indeed, had he tried any further treachery, the tribe would have dealt harshly with him. Therefore the preparations were begun for a wedding such as had never yet been seen for magnificence among the tribes of the desert.

Invitations were sent to all the far-flung allies of the Tribes of Abs and Adnan. Preparations at home were fast and furious, spurred on constantly by Antar, who, now that his heart's desire was so soon to be granted, was in a fever of impatience. The slaves

labored at preparing accommodations for the army of guests. The women sewed and cooked and chattered, in a flutter of delight. And the mild sun of spring shone upon them.

But not yet had they quite seen the last of Amarah, the bewhiskered dandy.

Upon Antar's return with Abla he had contented himself, since Amarah was so much the weakling, with reporting to the Chieftain what Amarah had done. And the Chieftain, full of anger, had reprimanded him severely before the entire tribe, sending him to his tent in bitter disgrace and ordering him to pay Antar a large sum of money as reparation. Yet his ardor for Abla had revived, and not even the disgrace, nor his regrets for his brother's death, could cool it.

Now the wedding ceremonies among the Arabs include many days of preparation for the bride, ceremonial purifications, painting of her feet and her finger-tips with henna, the "exhibition of the bride" to all the guests—though to-day it is only the women guests—dances and other things. In the course of these ceremonies Abla and her maidens repaired one evening in the moonlight to the lake at no great distance to disport themselves. And Amarah, who had spies watching her, knew of the event.

Therefore he dressed himself in a woman's garment

of dyed silk, covered his face with a veil, and followed.

But Abla had learned by bitter experience to be cautious. Therefore she sent word by Kehla, whose marriage was to occur at the same time as her mistress' nuptials, to Antar, telling him of the outing and begging him to conceal himself near the lake in order to protect her should any trouble arise. And Antar was only too happy to be near his belovèd for, owing to the many ceremonies, he now saw little of her.

Amarah followed the women till he came to the lake, where he found them disporting themselves freely, dancing, singing and making merry. He went among them unchallenged till he came upon Abla, who was singing a song of love, beating on a tiny pottery drum the while. So beautiful was she that all the other damsels paled before her as stars pale before the brilliant moon. And frenzy seized upon Amarah at sight of so much beauty.

Like a voracious eagle he pounced upon Abla and seized her in his arms. She supposed him to be a woman and was not at first alarmed. But when she felt the strength of his muscles she knew him for a man. She felt herself dishonored and disgraced, and she screamed aloud, calling upon Antar. The maidens with her were dismayed, and a great confusion arose.

Antar sprang forward at her call, his heart full of rage. As he bounded nearer Amarah saw him and was seized with panic. He attempted to flee, but his woman's robe tripped him. His veil fell off in his confusion and his perfumed whiskers peeped out. So he lay groveling and begging for mercy.

At sight of him in this ridiculous position Antar

forgot his rage and burst out laughing. He seized Amarah, and putting him across his knee, he spanked him as one does a child, so severely that for days he could hardly walk. The maidens too mocked at him. They held their noses at him and danced about him in a jeering circle. And one of them who was good at lampooning improvised a song, which they all learned and which was soon known by every one in the camp. Thus it ran:

"Amarah, leave alone the beautiful full-hipped damsels!
Leave all disputes about the lovely girls!

For you cannot plunge into the sea of deaths, and you are no horseman in the day of battle.
As to the quivering spear, touch not its strength, nor the cleaving scimitar.

You are the carrion of the plains and deserts.
You are the common talk of the merry, and the laughing-stock of the tribe.
Every one that sees you shall mock!

Die in grief. Otherwise live in contempt.
For never, never will there be an end of our lampoons upon you!"

Then the girls ran away, rocking with laughter. And there was nothing for Amarah to do but to retreat to the lake, take off his woman's clothes and cool his legs and his thighs in the water. After which he crawled into camp without his clothes.

By the next day the story had flown about among all the tribe and the guests who had assembled for the wedding. And the dandy, unable to endure the dis-

grace, took his people with him and left the tents of Abs, never to return.

This, with Rebia's death and Milik's acceptance of Antar, ended the serious enmity against the hero among his own people.

2

Then the wedding went forward, and never in the history of Arabia had there been such a magnificent event.

"I will make at Abla's wedding," said Antar, "five separate feasts. I will feed the birds of the air, the beasts of the wild, the men, the women and the children. Not a single living thing shall remain in the whole country but shall eat at her marriage festival!" He sent Shiboob with a hundred camels to the mountains, there to be slaughtered and skinned, to feast the birds. And when Shiboob had done this he cried aloud, "O ye birds of prey, ye vultures of death, come down and eat of Antar's wedding feast! This day he invites you all!" And the same was done for the lions and tigers.

As for the guests, who numbered many thousands, Antar ordered the chamberlains to spread carpets, that the victuals might not spoil, and that they might eat walking, eat standing, eat on horseback, eat sit-

ting, and eat in their sleep. Innumerable were the camels and sheep slaughtered for the feast, countless the skins of wine brought from Syria. The whole country round, with the mountains and the sand-hills, was covered with the tents of the wedding guests. And if but half their names were written here this volume would have no end.

In the place of honor Antar ordered a great pa-

vilion to be set up for the nuptials, the pavilion which he had chosen from the treasure-house of Chosroe of Persia. It was a load for forty camels and, when set up, was so vast that fifty horsemen might skirmish beneath the porch before it. It was painted with every manner of bird, beast, tree and flower, and decorated with gold and silver. Never had such a thing been seen in the desert.

For fifteen days the feasting continued. Magnificent were the presents given by the guests to the

triumphant Antar, in camels, horses, jewels, perfumes, embroidered robes and weapons. Yet Antar returned to every one as much as he received. Indeed in the greatness of his joy and the generosity of his heart he would have given away everything that he possessed, and beggared himself completely, had not the chiefs themselves protested. And they urged him to complete the nuptials before he could accomplish this.

Thus at last the evening descended which was to consummate the marriage. After the guests had eaten, the cups of wine were brought round to them. The men and the women were moving freely together, though this was not the custom. The slave girls sang and danced, and a general joy mounted in all their hearts.

"Hola!" cried the matrons and virgins, "we will not remain covered on Antar's wedding! By the faith of an Arab, we will not remain concealed behind these curtains! The doors shall not be shut upon us. We will see Abla in her magnificence, and we will walk in her train and make our offerings to her and Antar. For a happier night than this cannot be, and no one but a madman would miss it!"

Then they threw aside their veils, and the full moons appeared in all their lustre; and they flaunted the branches of their forms in the excess of their delight.

Now when the women of Abla's family, who were with the bride, heard what their cousins had done they were alarmed for the scandal which would thus be occasioned. So they resolved to finish the ceremony with all speed.

They clothed Abla in the magnificent robes, studded with precious stones, which Chosroe had sent to her. They placed his coronet upon her head, and loaded her with jewels and perfumes. She was so beautiful in the radiance of her joy that the eyes of those about her could hardly bear the sight, but were fain to glance aside as from the sun at noonday. The tirewomen surrounded her, and they requested Antar to let her come forth in state.

He gave them permission, while his brothers and slaves stood round the pavilion with drawn swords and javelins. He ordered them to place a lofty throne for Abla in front of the pavilion. They executed his commands. They lighted the brilliant and scented candles before her, and spread afar the odor of aloes and camphor, of musk and ambergris. The lights were fixed in candle-sticks of gold and silver. The torches blazed. And, while the women shouted and raised their voices in wild applause, Abla came forth in state.

In her hand she bore a drawn sword, whose lustre dazzled the eyesight, for this was part of the cere-

mony. When all had gazed their fill her mother took the sword out of her hand, and she prepared to take from her the embroidered outer robes and place others upon her, as was the custom.

But Antar the impetuous, who had waited so many years for his bride, could not wait another instant. He rushed to the throne and, cutting short the ceremony, he seized her as a hawk seizes a sparrow. He held her high above his head, uttering in this strange place his terrible war-cry, "O by Abs! I am ever the lover of Abla!" Then he dashed with her into the pavilion.

Thus the lovers won at last to their hearts' desires.

Chapter 13

TEN years went by.

Ten good years they were, ample repayment for the pain of waiting. Children came to them, and sons to carry on the line. Antar continued to do heroic deeds, till his fame spread beyond the seas and in Syria, in Byzantium and in Spain men told tales of him.

These exploits need no chronicling here, yet two shall be mentioned. He made a journey to the far home of his mother Zabeebah. Here he found that she had indeed spoken truth, and was the daughter of a great king. Thus Antar was of noble blood on both sides of his house. But this indeed the world might have guessed because of his noble exploits. And he brought back with him a kinswoman to serve

as companion for his mother and bring her news of her old home. Zabeebah wept for joy.

The second concerned also a journey, but shorter, a journey to the city of Mecca which, even in the days before the coming of the Prophet Mohammed, was the most sacred city of Arabia. Here Antar wrote his great Kasida, his ode, which even to this day is counted one of the rare jewels of Arabian literature. You may see it if you like, translated into many languages and among them our own tongue, in the books of the scholars. And he hung it, written in letters of gold, in the Kaaba, which is the centre of that sacred city of the desert. There it was counted one of the "Seven Golden Poems" whose memory shall live as long as the beautiful Arabic script shall be written.

But at last, in the unchanging order of fate, the hour was written when death should come to the hero, as to all men. And this was the way of it.

Antar was now Chieftain of the Tribe of Abs, for Zoheir and his sons had all been gathered to the dusk. One day the tribe was attacked by a rival tribe headed by a warrior of the name of Jezar. And Jezar was a famous archer. The attack failed and the Tribe of Abs was victorious.

In his youth Antar would have slain this Jezar, in

the clean death of battle. But now the responsibility of great events weighed on him, and he slew him not. Yet it seemed to him that some punishment should be meted out to the aggressor. Therefore, stooping to his one deed of cruelty in a mistaken kindness, he ordered that Jezar should be blinded by causing a red-hot sabre to be passed across his eyes. Then he granted him his life, liberty, and even the supreme rank in his own tribe.

But this cruelty was the cause of Antar's own death.

For from this time Jezar meditated in silence on revenge. Although his eyes were deprived of sight, he had in no way lost his skill in archery. His ear, practiced in following the movements of wild animals by the sound of their steps, was sufficient to guide his hand. Never did his arrow miss the mark. And his hatred, always alert, listened eagerly for the news which fame spread about his enemy.

At last he heard that Antar, after a distant and fortunate expedition, had returned to Yemen, laden with glory and booty, and was about to pass into the desert not far from Jezar's own encampment. When he heard this Jezar wept for envy and rage. He called a faithful slave, Nejim, and said to him:

"Four years have passed since, by Antar's orders, a burning iron destroyed the light of my eyes, and I am not yet revenged! But at last the time has come

when I may quench in his blood the fire which burns in my heart. Antar is encamped, they say, on the banks of the Euphrates. Thither shall I go to seek him. I shall lie hidden in the reeds of the river till heaven delivers his life into my hands."

Jezar ordered Nejim to bring him his swift she-camel. He armed himself with his quiver of poisoned arrows. Then Nejim made the camel kneel, helped his master to mount, and took the end of her halter to direct her steps towards the distant bank of the Euphrates. For a long day's march they advanced over a waterless waste, and the blind warrior made the desert echo with his wailings and his threats.

Finally they neared the banks of the river, whose course is marked by the line of green where grass and trees are verdant.

"What do you see on the other side?" asked Jezar.

"I see," answered the slave, "tents richly adorned, camels wandering in groups on the plain, spears planted in the ground at the doors of the tents, and horses, hobbled by the feet, before the tents of their masters."

"Look again, O slave. What else do you see?"

"I see a tent more splendid than the rest, erected at a little distance from the river. Before the door arises, like the mast of a ship, a long spear of steel, and beside it is a great horse blacker than ebony."

"Is it the horse of Antar, O slave?"

"It is Abjer, the great horse of Antar."

"Now has heaven given him into my hand!" cried Jezar. "We will wait for darkness." So they hid among the trees.

When night had covered with its shadows the banks of the river, Jezar said:

"Let us quit this place. The voices which come to me from the other side are too far off for the range of my arrows. Lead me nearer to the edge. Hide me among the reeds."

So Nejim led him to the very edge of the water and made him sit upon the bank opposite the tent of Antar. He gave him his bow and his quiver of poisoned arrows. Jezar chose from them the keenest, placed it upon the string, and awaited the hour of vengeance.

2

Meanwhile Antar, in the arms of Abla, who after ten years was still the core of his heart, was forgetting in the tent the fatigue of his long journey and his latest exploits.

Suddenly, from without, came the dismal howling of the watch dogs.

Antar roused himself. "What troubles the dogs?" he said. "Their howling moves me strangely to-night. Some danger is near."

Abla tried to quiet him, but he rose and went out into the night. The sky was dark and cloudy. Even to his eyes, accustomed to the darkness, only the line of the trees against the sky and the faint shimmer of the Euphrates were visible. His own hands were hidden from him. The howling of the dogs came from the river bank, and thither he groped his way till he stood on the bank of the stream.

The nearness of death was upon him, and he felt that the danger lay on the opposite side of the water. He raised his voice and called sharply to the slaves to search the other bank.

Scarcely had his resounding voice echoed in the hollow bed of the stream, reverberating in the rocks and recesses, when an arrow pierced his right side and penetrated to his entrails.

Antar did not cry out. No groan escaped his lips. Instead, when he had withdrawn the shaft with a firm hand, he called out in a loud voice to his invisible enemy:

"Traitor, who dared not attack me in the light of day, you shall not enjoy the fruits of your perfidy! You shall not escape the vengeance of Antar!"

At that voice, which made him think that his arrow had missed the mark, the blind Jezar, struck by terror at the thought of the vengeance of his enemy, swooned upon the bank. Nejim his slave thought him dead.

He mounted upon the camel and fled away in the darkness, leaving the blind man where he lay.

But Antar's slaves swam the stream, and one of them stumbled upon the body. He took it in his arms, carried it across the stream with the bow and arrows, and brought it into the light of Antar's tent.

Here the hero lay, suffering greatly. Abla was stanching his blood, bathing the wound with her tears. When the body was brought before him he recognized the mutilated countenance of his old enemy. Then indeed he knew that death was come upon him.

"Belovèd," said Abla to him tenderly, "why abandon hope? Ought a slight arrow-wound to alarm him who has confronted without fear so many swords and spears, the wounds from which cover his body?"

"Abla," replied her husband, "my hours are numbered. Look at the features of that face. It is Jezar. His traitorous arrow was poisoned!"

Then indeed Abla filled the night with her sobs. She tore her long hair, and scattered dust upon her head. And all the women of the encampment re-echoed her lamentations.

"Beloved wife," said Antar, "who will defend your honor and your life after the death of Antar on the long journey across the desert that remains for you? Only a second husband, another I, can save you from

the horrors of slavery. Of all the warriors of the desert here, Zeid and Amnem are those whose courage will best protect you. Choose one of them, send and promise him your hand."

But Abla cried, "Never, never while I live, will I take another after you."

"Then," went on the hero amid his suffering, "clothe yourself with my arms and mount my courser Abjer. In this disguise, which will make our enemies think that I still live, you will pass unscathed. Reply nothing to those who salute you upon the way. The sight of the arms and the horse of Antar alone will suffice to intimidate the boldest."

Then he ordered an immediate departure.

The tents were struck, the baggage packed. Abla, always obedient, restrained her tears, put on the heavy armor of Antar, girt herself with his sword, took his great spear in her hand and mounted Abjer. The slaves laid the doomed hero in Abla's litter; and they set out towards the country of Abs.

3

Now they had scarcely lost sight of the verdant banks of the Euphrates, to plunge into the immensity of the desert, when at a distance they saw tents like black dots on the horizon, or a black fringe on the blue

mantle of heaven. It was a numerous and powerful tribe. Three hundred horsemen advanced from it to fall upon the little caravan.

But when they came nearer, "It is Antar and Abla!" they said one to another. "Let us return to our tents and not call down the sand-storm upon us!"

Already they were turning the rein when an old sheikh, more thoughtful and sagacious than the young men, said:

"That is indeed the armor of Antar, and his great ebon courser, but it is neither his lofty figure nor his manly bearing. It is the figure of a timid woman, borne down by the weight of the iron which galls her frail limbs. Believe me, Antar is dead, or else an illness keeps him from mounting his horse!"

The horsemen, half believing, yet not daring to attack, turned back and followed the caravan.

Soon Abla could no longer support the great weight of the hero's spear. She was obliged to hand it to one of the slaves who walked beside her. The sun rose higher and reached the zenith, making the sand of the desert glow like fire. Then, worn out with grief and fatigue, she raised the visor to breathe an instant and to wipe the sweat from her eyes. The horsemen following caught a glimpse of the whiteness of her face.

"It is not the swarthy Antar!" they cried, and they dashed to the attack.

At the gallop of their horses behind him, at the neighing of their steeds and their savage cries, at the terrified voice of Abla which called him, Antar roused himself from his agony. He showed his head between the curtains and he uttered for the last time his terrible war-cry known of all the desert.

"O by Abs!" he cried, "I am Antar, and ever the lover of Abla. Rouse not my terrible vengeance!"

The manes of the horses stood erect, and they bore their riders rigid with terror.

"Woe to us!" cried the horsemen, "Antar lives! It is a snare which he has laid!" and they turned and fled. Only a small number, still trusting the voice of the old sheikh who was not deceived, followed the caravan.

Then Antar, half dead as he was, forced himself to rise. He put on his armor. He mounted Abjer; and he rode slowly forward beside the litter in which Abla now sat weeping.

At the close of the day they reached a valley not more than a day's march from the tents of Abs. It was called the Valley of the Gazelles. Surrounded by inaccessible mountains, it could only be entered from the desert side by a narrow and tortuous pass, where three horsemen could scarcely march abreast. Antar ordered his flocks, his tents, his baggage and his slaves to pass through before him.

Last of all Abla's litter passed, and halted beside him.

"Abla, my belovèd," said Antar, and his great voice was sunk to a whisper, "the cup of death is at my lips. Pass in safety to your father's tents. And forget not Antar, who loved you!" Then he kissed once more the eyes that were dear to him, and turned his horse across the narrow pass.

But now his agony increased. Every moment was a torture to him, and a fire like the flames of hell burned in his entrails. He planted his spear in the ground, and leaning against the shaft, like a warrior allowing his horse to breathe, he stood motionless at the entrance to the pass.

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Then the thirty warriors who had followed the caravan stopped, hesitating, a few hundred paces from the motionless figure.

"Antar," they said one to another, "has noticed that we follow him. He waits there to slay us all. Let us profit by the shades of night which are falling to escape his sword and rejoin our brothers."

But the old sheikh, steadfast in his opinion, held them still.

"My cousins," said he in a low voice, "heed not the counsels of fear. When has Antar waited for an enemy? Do you not know his fiery courage, which dashes against all comers? Believe me, something is amiss with him. He attacks not because he cannot. Come then, and at him! Or, if you still fear, at least wait till dawn arises and clears away your doubts."

Half persuaded by the old man, the thirty horsemen resolved to remain where they were. But, always troubled and alarmed by the least cloud of dust which the wind raised about the feet of Abjer, they passed the whole night on horseback, allowing not their eyes to close in sleep.

At last day began to lighten the sky, and to clear away the shadows which covered the desert. The great figure was still in the same attitude, and Abjer, obedient to his master's thought, was as motionless as his lord.

Then the thirty consulted together. They were now persuaded that the hero must be dead. Yet not one of them dared advance to make sure, so strong was the habit of fear inspired by the greatest warrior of the desert.

At last the old sheikh descended from his mare, let go the bridle, and pricking her with his spear, he drove her towards the entrance of the pass.

Scarcely had she reached in her course the border of the desert near the gorge when the fiery stallion Abjer darted neighing after the riderless mare. At the first bound of the courser, Antar, supported only by his spear which slipped away from under him, fell like a falling tower, and the clang of his armor resounded in the desolate pass.

Then the old sheikh, coming to the body, marveled at the great size of it, and the gigantic strength it had possessed. He opened his lips and cursed the hero bitterly.

"Son of a dog," said he, "may you rot in hell! Even in death you have protected your women." And he spurned the body with his foot.

Yet this he did for the greatness of his admiration, that he might not weep for his enemy. And he made no attempt to follow Abla, who was a full night's march away. Instead he ordered the men to take up the body and give it honorable burial. And it was done. They left Antar there at the foot of the pass, his tall spear thrust in the ground beside his grave, and his helmet above it.

But Abjer they tried in vain to capture. The great stallion, knowing his master dead, would yield to no lesser hand. Fleet as the wild deer he bounded away into the desert, and nevermore might any man bestride him.

And this is the story of the hero Antar, warrior, lover, poet, whom none might conquer in battle, whom none might equal in love, and whom none might surpass in song. The echo of his terrible war-cry still sighs in the gusty desert.

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